George Herbert's The Country Parson| A guide to the poems of the temple

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GEORGE HERBERT'S THE COUNTRY PARSON

A GUIDE TO THE POEMS OF THE TEMPLE

By

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

During the years 1630-1633, while leading an active life as vicar of the small country parish of Bemerton, George Herbert wrote his short pastoral treatise entitled The Country Parson. It was also during these years that Herbert composed over half the poems in The Temple, and revised many of the others. It seems obvious that some relationship between the pastoral treatise and the poem may exist if only in that both were created by the same mind during the same few years. Further, both works have as their topic the proper concerns of a Christian's life. What the poems deal with in a dramatic, personalized manner, The Country Parson deals with didactically. Thus a knowledge of The Country Parson would seem to add much to an understanding and appreciation of Herbert's poetry.

However, Herbert's critics have done little in studying the relationship of The Country Parson to the poems of The Temple. Anthologies and studies which discuss the "metaphysical" poets as a group contain a good deal of criticism on Herbert's writings. The comparative studies make little reference to Herbert's pastoral ministry. Rather, the studies primarily emphasize the relationships between the various poets and their techniques. In mentioning such works as The Country Parson, the studies merely point out Herbert's
piety and do not shed any great light on the poetry. These studies often compare Herbert to John Donne, and usually depict Herbert as a lesser apostle.¹ For example, Sir Herbert Grierson, in his anthology of seventeenth century lyrics, sees Herbert as a sincere but "not a greatly imaginative" poet.² Herbert's production of religious lyrics seems a deficit when compared to Donne's use of a wide range of poetic subjects. As Joan Bennett says, somewhat condescendingly, Herbert's poetry is "simpler," the "range of his experience . . . narrower."³ Granted, the scope of this paper does

¹This seems the gist of the comments on Herbert found in George Williamson, *Six Metaphysical Poets* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1967), and in Joan Bennett, *Five Metaphysical Poets* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1964). However, A. Alvarez, in *The School of Donne* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 68, not only decries such a treatment of Herbert that sees him as a pious but somewhat limited metaphysical, but goes on to criticize other recent studies of Herbert's poetry such as Joseph Summers' *George Herbert, His Religion and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), and Rosemund Tuve's *A Reading of George Herbert* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1952). These studies, says Alvarez, rightly see Herbert as more that a disciple of Donne, but still primarily emphasize Herbert's piety, only in a more technical and less "quaint" form than before. Helen White, in *The Metaphysical Poets* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 151, says that "to an age all too disposed to equate simplicity of heart with simplicity of mind, and both with dullness, the picture which Walton draws of the gentle saint of Bemerton may be a real bar to the appreciation of the fiber of his spiritual life and the energy of his mind."


³Bennett, p. 49.
not extend to a discussion of the relative merits of Herbert and other seventeenth-century poets. However, since I maintain that an understanding of The Country Parson is essential to a full appreciation of Herbert's art, I hold that any comparative study which does not take it well into account is incomplete.

I do not negate the importance of poetic fashions and traditions as they may have affected Herbert's poems. Certainly Herbert knew the art of poetry, and would recognize such an art as the proper concern of a well-bred Englishman. He was personally acquainted with Donne, and in his home as well as in his position at Cambridge, Herbert could not have helped being aware of much of the controversy over the poetics of the day. However, we must go beyond the province of the arts to discuss adequately Herbert's own poetry, for judging from his writings, he declared himself to be a disciple of Christ first and a poet second. Throughout The Country Parson Herbert repeatedly says that the good parson must not only preach God's word, but must also imitate Christ in everything that he does. Whether preaching, counseling, entertaining friends, dealing with servants, performing music, or simply journeying from one town to another, the parson must always be "in God's stead." "A priest is to do that which Christ did and after his manner, both for Doctrine and Life."4

It is natural to assume that this primary concern with the imitation of Christ in all endeavours extended to Herbert's writing of poetry. Herbert's own writings demonstrate that this is a valid assumption. A letter which Herbert sent with the manuscript of The Temple to his good friend Nicholas Ferrar also contains this emphasis. Herbert directs his friend to read the book, and "if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor Soul, let it be made publick; if not, let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies." Herbert wishes his poetry to be judged not in relation to the poetic talents of his contemporaries, but in relation to the "dejected poor Soul." In short, Herbert demands that his poetry fulfill his duty as a Christian and especially as a priest. Herbert concerned himself not only with poetics in The Temple, but with the practical matters of faith as well. He tempered his concern for art with his concern for the furtherance of his own faith and God's glory. He dealt not only with Donne's poetic techniques, or his own for that matter, but also with every man's soul. "Utmost art" in the service of God makes up the

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6 It might be argued since Herbert most likely wrote a number of the poems in The Temple prior to his exemplary years at Bemerton and before he had committed his whole life to the service of God, that an application of his statement to all the poems is not valid. However, it need only be pointed out that Herbert did undoubtedly revise his early poems before placing them in The Temple manuscript, and that he also left out of the manuscript some poems of doubt such
content of The Temple.

Study of Herbert's poetry, then, would not be complete without study of his faith. Many of Herbert's critics have recognized this, and have approached his faith from an historical perspective. Scholars such as Joseph Summers, Rosemund Tuve and Arnold Stein have done much to uncover Herbert's religious heritage and the points of controversy which a seventeenth century Anglican must have had to resolve in his own mind. These scholars have shown that the thinking of Augustine, the theory of the "via media," and the debates over the relative values of faith and works, free will and predestination, all had, at the very least, an unconscious effect on Herbert's poetry.7

Furthermore, Louis L. Martz, in The Poetry of Mediation, has argued that Herbert's poems are in a clearly defined tradition of

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As Joseph Summers said, "apparently Herbert did not believe these poems would 'turn to the advantage of any dejected poor Soul'" (Summers, p. 62).

In his study, Summers concludes, "We can fully realize Herbert's poetic achievement . . . only within the light of the ideas, beliefs, and conventions of early seventeenth-century England" when "religion was generally recognized, verbally at least, as the most vital issue for man" (p. 185). Summers establishes Herbert as an advocate of the middle way between the extremes of Puritanism and Roman catholicism in poetry as well as religious matters. In A Reading of George Herbert, Rosemund Tuve writes of the shift of human ignorance, and attempts to repair this ignorance on the part of the modern reader as regards Herbert's background for his poetry by showing the importance of medieval and renaissance liturgical symbolism to an appreciation of The Temple. Arnold Stein, in George Herbert's Lyrics (Baltimore, Md.:The John Hopkins Press, 1968), shows Herbert's indebtedness to Augustine's rhetoric for much of his philosophy of poetics.
meditative practices developed by Ignatius Loyola and François de Sales.⁸

However, as I have already indicated, critics have done little to relate Herbert's own religious treatises to his poetry. Certainly the debate on religious matters contemporary to Herbert had an effect on his poetry; but even more certainly, Herbert's own prose writings on religion are inextricably related to his poetry. Herbert's own statements substantiate this contention.

Throughout his prose, and especially in The Country Parson, Herbert maintains that the personal responses to God and his grace are far more important than more public, scholastic religious matters. Herbert's own writings, revealing of his private beliefs, are thus most important for an understanding of the theology upon which he based his poems. In The Country Parson Herbert states that the good priest has read widely in the Church fathers and schoolmen, and has digested their writings and put them into a book of his own. However, the writings are to be "diversely clothed, illustrated, and inlarged. For though the world is full of such composures, yet every man's own is fittest, readiest, and most savory to him" (p. 230, 11. 4-5). Herbert finds most appealing the personal relationship with his God. Further, "The Countrey Parson's Library is a holy Life: for besides the blessing that that brings upon it, there being a promise, that if the Kingdome of God be first sought, all other things shall be added, even it selfe is a Sermon. For the

temptations with which a good man is beset, and the ways which he used to overcome them, being told to another, whether in private conference, or in the Church, are a Sermon" (p. 278, ll. 11-18). The best means of winning over to redemption those who are unbelievers is to approach the problem personally, to use oneself as an example. Though the parson understands the arguments of theologians and scholars, they have little heartfelt effect on his congregation, and further, there may be a danger "in prying into highly speculative and unprofitable questions ... another great stumbling block to the holiness of Scholars" (p. 238, ll. 18-19). The Country Parson emphasizes that preaching must concern the worshipper's personal relationship with God. The worshipper may be a member of the congregation, or he may be the poet and parson himself.

Indeed, the only document of the Christian tradition to which Herbert gives wholehearted support is Scripture itself. "The chief and top of his (The parson's) knowledge consists in ... the holy Scriptures. There he sucks, and lives" (p. 228, ll. 21-23). In this love of Scripture, it is not hard to recognize again the personal attachment Herbert feels with the book. As he says in one poem from The Temple:

Such are thy secrets, which my life makes good, And comments on thee: for in ev'rything Thy words do find me out, and parallels bring, And in another make me understood ("The Holy Scriptures (II)", ll. 9-12).

In the Bible Herbert finds the voice of God speaking directly to his
own soul. This direct communication is available to any who use the means of "a holy Life, remembering what his Master saith, that if any do Gods will, he shall know of the Doctrine, John 7 ..." (p. 228, ll. 27-29). The private occasion of a holy life leads man to God, more than the "speculative and unprofitable questions" of the scholars. This "privateness" of Herbert's religion suggests that if we are to understand his poetry we should go first to his own personal prose writings. The thoughts found in The Country Parson might illuminate the poems of The Temple as well as the thinking Augustine.

This is not to say that the poetics of The Temple are found in The Country Parson, or that Herbert based the technical motives of his poetry in some way on the dicta put forth in this pastoral treatise. Rather it is to say that many of the concerns of Herbert in The Country Parson are the concerns of Herbert in The Temple, and that an understanding of one volume will shed light on the other.

One does not have to look far in either work for the discovery of like concerns. Herbert dedicates both works in a most similar manner. In his dedication to the poems of The Temple, Herbert says that

Lord, my first fruits present themselves to thee; Yet not mine neither: for from thee they came, And must return. Accept of them and me, And make us strive, who shall sing best thy name. Turn their eyes hither, who shall make a gain: Theirs, who shall hurt themselves or me, refrain. 

("The Dedication")
It is obvious that Herbert intends a dual audience for his poems—God first, then any man whose soul might be bettered by the reading of the verses. Herbert indicates a like intention in his prefatory remarks to *The Country Parson*, where he says that he writes the treatise "to please Him, for whom I am, and live, and who giveth mee my Desires and Performances and ... the way to please him, is to feed my Flocke diligently and faithfully ..." ("The Author to the Reader," p. 224).

Herbert expresses pastoral concerns, not poetic concerns in his dedication of *The Temple* as well as in the preface to *The Country Parson*. Of course, Herbert is not really positing any new and startling premise here. He only follows the practice of every religious writer preceding him. But this is precisely the point: both in his prose and in his poetry, Herbert does not deal solely with problems of poetic style, such as whether the plain style is best, but discusses matters of religion. His prefaces do not develop any poetic theory, as does Wordsworth's "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Rather they refer primarily to what is proper for a Christian pastor. The parson finds it proper for himself to offer his poetry to God. The answers to the problems he confronts in such a dedication make for him his poetic theory. How can foolish man dare present his pitiful gifts to God? How can he make his finite poems worthy of acceptance by infinite Divinity? Herbert perfected his art to please God, the most discerning critic of all. Moreover, not only must the pastor offer his work to God, he must bring others to God.
through his work. It is Herbert the pastor, as well as Herbert the poet, who dedicates the verses of The Temple.

In conclusion, I hold as valid an approach to Herbert's Temple which emphasises his prose treatise, The Country Parson. Both works are the product of Herbert's mind during his three years at Bemerton. Herbert's insistence in his letter to Ferrar that he judge his poems solely as to whether or not they could serve to further the redemption of any Christian shows that in his poems Herbert was concerned with the religious matters discussed in The Country Parson. Moreover, the "privateness" of Herbert's religion argues for our comparing the Temple poems to Herbert's own religious statements found in his prose. Finally, the like concerns in The Country Parson and The Temple, beginning with the similar dedications of both works, suggest that a study of the pastoral treatise is important for a full appreciation of Herbert's poetry.
CHAPTER II

THE COUNTRY PARSON AND THE POETICS OF THE TEMPLE

A Priest to the Temple, or The Country Parson, was first published in 1652, an inopportune time for a work on the Anglican ministry to appear, as this was the era of the Puritan Commonwealth in England. It was not until after the Restoration that a second edition of the work was published in 1671. In the Introduction to his edition of Herbert's works, G. E. Hutchinson points out that the treatise was much quoted and praised in Walton's Lives and in the eighteenth century. Many subsequent editions appeared up until the present century. Herbert intended the book to be the depiction of the ideal country parson, a high mark at which the faithful Anglican pastor could aim. However, the personal touches and witty style which Herbert gave to the treatise have made it entertaining.

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9 Hutchison, p. xlvii.

10 It would appear that Herbert's treatise has become obsolete as a manual for the pastor. In researching recent books on the pastoral ministry I could locate only one that made specific reference to The Country Parson. Copyright date on the book was 1896. (John Watson, The Cure of Souls (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1896), p. 222).
Several modern critics of Herbert's poetry have made reference to *The Country Parson*. However, no scholar has attempted an extended study of the work as it relates thematically to the style of poetry Herbert fashioned in *The Temple*.

As I have already stated, problems which *The Temple* treats

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12 Margaret Bottrall, in *George Herbert*, devotes one entire chapter to *The Country Parson*, studying the treatise primarily in "reminder of the virtues of that church (of England), so previously disrupted by the triumph of the dissenters" (p. 82). However, she does point out similarities in style between *The Country Parson* and *The Temple*, as well as emphasize the contrast between the tranquil tone of the treatise and the oftentimes anxious feeling of *The Temple* poems. Marchette Chute, in her biography of Herbert and Robert Herrick, *Two Gentle Men* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1959) uses *The Country Parson* to help create Herbert's personality. Joseph Summers makes frequent reference to *The Country Parson* in substantiating some of his general theories on Herbert's poems. Other critics, notably Arnold Stein, Rosemund Tuve, Louis L. Martz, and Mary Rickey in *Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1966) use *The Country Parson* occasionally to elaborate upon their interpretations of individual poems in *The Temple*. 
dramatically and personally *The Country Parson* treats didactically.

One such problem is finding the proper way to address God. As the poet must determine what is worthy in writing to God, so must the parson know what is right in the liturgy and worship practiced in his church. To create poetry for the God of Creation seems an impossible task:

*How should I praise thee, Lord, how should my rymes*

*Gladly engrave thy love in steel,*

*If what my soul doth feel sometimes,*

*My soul might ever feel.* (*The Temper,* 11. 1-4)

*Lord, how can man preach thy eternall word?*

*He is a brittle crazie glasse.* (*The Windows,* 11. 1-2)

*My God, a verse is not a crown,*

*No point of honour or gay suit,*

(*The Quidditie,* 11. 1-2)

*... I do praise thee, yet I praise thee not,*

*My prayers mean thee, yet my prayers stray.*

(*Justice,* 11. 8-9)

*Verses, ye are too fine a thing, too wise*

*For my rough sorrows: cease, be dumbe and mute.*

(*Grief,* 11. 13-14)

To write a poem and simultaneously subject it to a scrupulous examination of its contract with God is a demanding task. Perhaps the task is an impossible one, for what artist, acutely mindful of the artistry of God, dare compete with it?

*I have considered it, and find*

*There is no dealing with thy mighty passion;*

*For though I die for thee, I am behinde;*

*My sinnes deserve the condemnation.* (*The Reprisall,* 11. 1-4)

In the poems of *The Temple* Herbert resolves the problem of what art is worthy of God. In *The Country Parson*, Herbert determines
what mode of churchly behavior is proper for the clergyman. It is to the double duty of the parson, to God and to man, that Herbert refers when he discusses in The Country Parson the proper upkeep of the church building, a physical matter which is shown to have its place in the spiritual worship of God. The parson is to see that floors are swept regularly, linen and carpeting kept spotless, paintings of a reverend nature placed in proper display.

And all this he doth, not as out of necessity, or as putting a holiness in the things, but as desiring to keep the middle way between superstition and slovenliness, and as following the Apostles two great and admirable Rules in things of this nature: The first whereof is, "Let all things be done decently, and in order." The second, "Let all things be done to edification," I Cor. 14. For these two rules comprize and include the double object of our duty, God, and our neighbour; the first being for the honour of God; the second for the benefit of our neighbor (p. 246, ll. 22-32).

The parson offers, as the guideline for the upkeep of his church, keeping the "middle way between superstition and slovenliness." Too great an emphasis on the formal layout of the church might lead to a valuing of the forms for their own sake, to the worship of false images for both the parson and his congregation. One might construe too little emphasis as carelessness or laziness, in that man is not performing to the utmost in this world his possibilities in the worship of God. The reader can see a like attachment to the middle way in the other church with which Herbert concerned himself, The Temple.

In poetry as well as in the upkeep of his Church, man must avoid a shallow reliance on form for form's sake. In "Jordan (II)," Herbert demonstrates how a misplaced emphasis on form, embellishment
for embellishment's sake, is as out of place in poetry as it is in the church.

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

As flames to worke and winde, when they ascend,
So did I weave my self into the sense.
But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
Whisper, How wide is all this long pretence!
There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd;
Copie out onely that, and save expense.

So wrapped up in his own metaphor and winding sense, the poet forgets his intention; the loving praise of God, a praise which should come naturally from the heart. As Joseph Summers indicates, this weaving of the self into the sense of a poem would seem to most modern critics a hoped-for end, a most admirable combining of thought and feeling. Herbert's condemnation of such a technique would seem a mistake and even a negation of his own style of poetry. But Herbert is actually dealing more with a problem of faith than with a problem of poetics. His definition of the "self" must be understood as being something quite different from the modern's concept. As Summers concludes,

The self was corrupt and a barrier to praise. In The Temple, Herbert did not intend to "weave "that" self into the sense." The search for 'quaint words, and trim invention,' the process of 'Curling with metaphors a plain intention,' implied a dependence on the self rather than upon God. It was an evidence of 'Spirituall pride . . . .'13

In his over-involvement with complicated design, the poet might commit the sin of spiritual pride. Herbert singled out just this temptation as one of The Country Parson's two principal enemies:

... He keepeth his watch and ward, night and day against the proper and peculiar temptations of his state of life, which are principally these two, Spirituall pride, and Impurity of heart: against these ghostly enemies he girdeth up his loynes, keeps the imagination from roving, puts on the whole Armour of God, and by the vertue of the shield of faith he is not afraid... of the sicknesse that destroyeth at noone day, (Ghostly pride and self-conceite) (p. 233, ll. 1-8).

The "self" which Herbert refers to in "Jordan (II)" is the embodiment of the "spiritual pride" which he sees as the chief adversary of the cleric in The Country Parson. It is apparent that the major threat to success for the parson is also the major threat for the religious poet. Whether man can praise God depends upon his recognition of his own humble place in relation to divinity.

How man should praise God is one of the central concerns of The Temple and The Country Parson. "Jordan (II)" shows Herbert's derision of pretentiously embellished poetry.

Clearly Herbert does not write formless poetry. But the poet has to steer between disregard for form and obsession with it. Similarly, the parson must watch out for "slovenliness" as well as superstition (p. 246, l. 25). Herbert does not argue against formal ritual itself but only against that which would tend towards superstition, that which would obscure the ultimate end of the worship, God. For Herbert, what is true in ritual is also true in writing poetry. In the poem, "Jordan (II)," Herbert does not decide that
the poet should throw down his pen. He says he should seek the proper form in his poetry. He should realize that "There is in love, a sweetnesse readie penn'd: Copie out onely that . . . ." Herbert maintains that form comes easily to the poet who rightly understands the love in his heart. Why this is so can be clarified through a study of Herbert's ideas regarding the love of God as found in his poems and in The Country Parson.

In "Jordan (II)," Herbert states that he relies upon "love" for the proper form of his poetry. At first this seems to be a vague solution. Hasn't he been writing out of "love" anyway? And doesn't he say that this "love" caused him to write poorly-devised, overly-embellished poems? To resolve this confusion the reader must realize the source of his love for God. As Herbert concludes in a poem which attempts to define the proper praise of God:

... if th' heart be moved,
Although the verse be somewhat scant,
God doth supplie the want.
As when th' heart sayes (sighing to be approved,
"O, could I love!" and stops: God writeth, "Loved."
("A True Hymme," ll. 16-20)

God Himself "supplie(s) the want." God is the one who writes "loved." As Herbert says in The Country Parson, man should not "dare to appear before thy face, who are contrary to thee . . . for we are darknesse . . . and shame" (p. 238, ll. 9-11). Only with the fullest realization that God is "our Creatour, and we thy work," and that God "hast made our salvation, not our punishment" his glory, can man dare appear before God (pp. 283-289). Herbert can
dare speak to God of his love for Him because God has put that love there, and has sustained Herbert in a world which provides situations for the fullest expression of his love. The spiritual writer must realize his inspiration and write accordingly. It is God who awakens man's "Lute" and "Viol" and "all . . . powers to glorifie" God (p. 289). His realization that true emotion is a result of God's love, will provide all the poetic inspiration Herbert needs. Only God's love allows Herbert to write poetry in the first place. This love sustains the world, the subject matter of his verse. It is in this sort of magnanimous love, love that keeps the world spinning, that there is a "sweetness readie penn'd."

Purely human invention can result only in those thoughts that "burnish, sprout, and swell." The poet need not invent when God has already supplied everything for anyone who reciprocates his love.

The twofold purpose of Herbert's poetry, as I have already stated, is to praise God and to edify. The type of poetry that Herbert wrote, which he felt was inspired by God, was designed to achieve precisely these two aims. The style which resulted from the fulfillment of these aims was often referred to, somewhat derogatorily, as being "unsophisticated," simple, and perhaps "childlike." The assumption seems to be that Herbert chose a simple language and homely situations in his verse because he was

\[14\] Bennett, p. 63.
simple-minded, at least as compared to Donne. However, in considering Herbert's poetic statements about poetry, and in examining his prose in The Country Parson, it is apparent that Herbert wrote simply, not because it was all he could do, but because he felt it was the best any man could do.

All creation, no matter how "homely," manifests the glory of God. Thus, the poet rightly uses anything in creation to praise God. Further, the poet's use of all of God's creation as a source for poetry does double-duty, for it presents a means for edification, again showing the great providence of the Creator. In a section of The Country Parson which outlines the proper method of catechizing for the parson, Herbert characteristically refers to the uses of Holy Scripture, to establish the point that all the created world provides the parson with an ideal means of edification.

When the answerer (to the Catechism) sticks, an illustrating the thing by something else, which he knows, making what hee knows to serve him in that which he knows not: As, when the Parson once demanded after other questions about mans misery; since man is so miserable, what is to be done? And the answerer could not tell; He asked him again, what he would do, if he were in a ditch? This familiar illustration made the answer so plaine, that he was even ashamed of his ignorance; for he could not but say, he would hast out of it as fast as he could. Then he proceeded to ask, whether he could get out of the ditch alone, or whether he needed a helper, and who was that helper. This is the skill, and doubtlesse the Holy Scripture intends this much, when it condescends to the naming of a plough, a hatchet, a bushell, leaven, boyes piping and dancing; shewing that things of ordinary use are not only to serve in the way of drudgery, but to be washed, and cleansed, and serve for lights even of Heavenly Truths.(11. 1-16, p. 257).

The parable method of Scripture is divinely ordained, and its
effectiveness glorifies God in his divine wisdom. As Herbert says later when he maintains that the parson must also be a practical physician:

... our Saviour made plants and seeds to teach the people: for he was the true householder, who bringeth out of his treasure things new and old; the old things of Philosophy, and the new of Grace; and maketh the one serve the other. And I conceive, our Saviour did this ... that by familiar things hee might make his Doctrine slip the more easily into the hearts even of the meanest. Secondly, that labouring people (whom he chiefly considered) might have every where monuments of his Doctrine, remembering in gardens, his mustard-seed, and lillyes; in the field, his seed-corn, and tares; and so not be drowned altogether in the works of their minds to better things, even in the midst of their pain (p. 261, ll. 13-26).

A statement like this clarifies the design of a poem such as "Easter-wings." In its design the poem glorifies God, for it mimics the marvelous design of redemption He has ordained. It glorifies God for the lucid system He has supplied to edify all who seek Him. It glorifies God for His love, which allows man to present such poems to God, and to other men for their instruction.

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.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne,
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me ("Easter Wings").
Herbert can put his poem into this form because God has already created such a form. The poet need only recognize the form and, being charitable, pass it on to others for their instruction. In this sense we can reconcile this elaborate poem to the thoughts of the "Jordan" poems. Herbert did not invent the design of the wings. God did. The precise manner in which the rising and falling of the lines coincides with the rising and falling of the theme demonstrates this belief. As the longer lines grow out of the shortest in the poem, so does the glory of God, and of man, rise from its thinnest hour. Speaking of the glory of the Redemption in The Country Parson, Herbert says: "But though the streams of thy bloud were currant through darknesse, grave, and hell; yet by these conflicts, and seemingly hazards, didst thou arise triumphant, and therein mad'ist us victorious" (p. 288, ll. 32-33, p. 289, ll. 1-2). The world had "everywhere" such "monuments of his Doctrine" (p. 261, ll. 21-22). His use of the wings to describe Redemption is but one of the "familiar things" by which "our Saviour . . . might make his Doctrine slip the more easily into the hearts even of the meanest" (p. 261, ll. 18-20).

In essence then, the poet's function is to use the universe and its patterns which God has created in his divine providence as "windows" through which man can perceive true spiritual reality. In his poem "In Angelos" Herbert says:
Si non per species, nequimus ipsi,
Quid ipsi sumus, assequie putando.
Non tantum est iter Angelis ad undas,
Nullo circuitu scienda pungent,
Illis perpeduae patent fenestrae ("In Angelos," 11. 9-13).

The angels alone of God's creatures can see spiritual reality directly.
For them "perpetual windows stand open." Man's window, however, is
the opaque physical world in which he finds himself. As a perceptive
Christian, then, it is Herbert's duty to show his neighbor the true
spiritual reality within this physical reality. For Herbert's duty, like the parson's with his physical church, is to do all things for
edification. Doing all things for edification seems the essence of
most of Herbert's admonitions to the parson in The Country Parson
concerning "homely," practical affairs. Even the parson's clothing
and the manner in which he orders his household can be important
duties:

The Parsons . . . apparell (is) plaine, but reverend, and clean,
without spots, or dust, or smell; the purity of his mind break­
ing out, and dilating it selfe even to his body, cloaths, and
habitation (p. 228, 11. 10-13).

Outward appearances reveal inner truths. For this reason the parson
is also "very exact in the governing of his house, making it a copy
and modell for his Parish" (p. 239, 11. 6-7). In addition, the
parson's use of God's formal design as a metaphor for spiritual truth
goes far towards achieving the other purpose Herbert stated for his
writing in both The Temple and The Country Parson; that is, the
glorification of God. In ordering his household, the Parson
"admires and imitates the wonderful providence and thrift of the
great householder of the world . . ." (p. 241, 11. 24-25). The parson should hold up God's admirable design for all to perceive, so that they might praise it. As Herbert states in "The Windows,"

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

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

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

Considering the dual dedication of his poems, and for that matter the dedication of his life, Herbert's matching of sound to sense in his poetry also takes on added significance beyond that of fine poetics. Such an approach teaches superbly, helping the preacher to put his point across. Such an approach also (as I have already stated in relationship to other characteristics of Herbert's verse) allows Herbert to point up the providential design of God, and thus glorify Him. The very sounds of God's creation can lead man to Him. As Herbert remarks upon church music:

Now I in you without a bodie move,
Rising and falling with your wings;
We both together sweetly live and love,
Yet say sometimes, God help poore Kings.
Comfort, I'll die; for if you poste from me,
    Sure I shall do so, and much more;
But if I travell in your companie,
    You know the way to heavens doore ("Church-Musick," ll. 5-12).
The design of God's providence has enthralled Herbert even in the
form of music. It can also be used by the poet to enthral others.

That Herbert wrote his poetry with a full awareness of the
poetic techniques of his day seems obvious when we consider his educa-
tion, his position at Cambridge, and his apparent production of a
number of poems as a young man. The wide range and variety of
metaphorical expression, the plain language, the dramatic setting, and
other techniques found in Herbert's poetry were most likely first
inspired by writers such as John Donne. His knowledge of these
techniques and his adoption of those techniques which he considered

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15 In her study, The Metaphysical Poets, Helen White states that
Herbert "must have been pushing forward his general reading, a
general reading which, as we have seen, put him in possession of the
movements of his day, in certain fields at least, to a degree
beyond that of most of his contemporaries. One likes to think of him
visiting his mother now and then in the beautiful Italian gardens which
her young husband, Sir John Danvers, had laid out at their home in
Chelsea, and there perhaps deepening that friendship with John Donne
which was to prove one of the most important influences of his life.
And while it is impossible to date more than a few of his poems, he
must have been producing at least enough verse to consolidate the
kind of reputation as a poet that a man in his position in society
would have—the reputation for verses passed from hand to hand and
admiringly copied into commonplace books."

16 Magdalen Herbert, George's mother, was the recipient of
several poems by John Donne, including the oftentimes quoted, "The
Autumnall." Herbert probably had access to the poems and much
conversation on poetry. Thus his home life provided a proper
atmosphere for the development of a poet.
most refined and related to his own theories on poetry also could be considered a part of Herbert's glorification of God. No man dare offer any but the best to his God. We do right, Herbert says in The Country Parson, "when we use our reason, and apply our powers to the service of him, that gives them (p. 232, ll. 5-6). The aptitudes a man has are gifts of God, and should be used to His glory. Certainly Herbert could consider his poetic talent a gift of God. He could not neglect his natural talent but practice it to the utmost for God's glory. As Herbert reiterates in a section praising employment in The Country Parson, "every gift or ability is a talent to be accounted for, and to be improved to our Master's advantage" (p. 274, ll. 24-26).

Both Herbert's poetry and The Country Parson deal with man's proper conduct in God's sight. Both the religious poet and the parson must steer the middle way between sloppiness and superstition.

17In George Herbert's Lyrics, Arnold Stein sees Herbert's total use of his God-given talents as a key to interpreting Herbert's style. "The poet who does not suppress or overlook the reluctances in himself when writing about man and God, whose major theme is the mystery of God's art with man, does not stifle his talents for imaginative expression. His themes are limited in range, though not in depth, but few if any poets more fully use all their resources, or more intimately reveal themselves by the special grace of artistic freedom-in-discipline" (p. 207).
between carelessness and obsession with form. To make his actions worthy of his vocation, the parson poet should produce poetry that simultaneously praises God and edifies man. Always he must recognize that his inspiration comes from God, Who in His infinite wisdom has provided a world of reference for preaching His doctrine. Often this world of reference extends to simple things; "homely" metaphors through which to preach God's word. The country parson tends a rustic congregation and perhaps his concerns spill over into the parson poet's interests. That Herbert still created fine poetry out of such pastoral concerns shows his genius.

Herbert utilized the guidelines offered for the parson in his poetry. Applying these guidelines in analyzing his individual poems would seem as profitable as applying other less immediate and private criteria such as an inherited meditative technique or an absorbed 17th century poetics.
CHAPTER III

THE COUNTRY PARSON AND THE THEMES OF THE TEMPLE

"THE FORERUNNERS"

The application of The Country Parson to one of Herbert's poems can demonstrate the importance of considering the pastoral treatise when discussing Herbert's poetry. The poem, "The Forerunners," is most useful as a springboard into the study of the other Temple poems. Though not usually considered one of Herbert's greatest poems on poetry, I feel "The Forerunners" is of central importance in studying Herbert's poetics, for it appears to make a summarizing statement on his complaints over secular poetry, complaints found in other of his poems. I maintain that Herbert's conclusions found in "The Forerunners" can be clarified through reference to The Country Parson.

Before this comparison between the poem and the pastoral treatise can be made, it is necessary to recall Herbert's stand regarding poetic propriety by examining those poems which make direct statements on poetry. I have already shown the pervasiveness of pastoral thought in Herbert's endeavors, poetic and otherwise. The first two "Love" poems, "Jordan (I)," and "The Quidditie" can further show how deeply Herbert's religious concerns permeate his poetics.
"Love (I)" demonstrates the genesis of Herbert's ideas relating to the proper dedication of poetry.

Immortall Love, authour of this great frame,
Sprung from that beautie which can never fade;
How hath man parcel'd out thy glorious name,
And thrown it on that dust which thou hast made,
While mortall love doth all the title pain
Which siding with invention, they together
Bear all the sway, possissing heart and brain,
(Thy workmanship) and give thee share in neither.
Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit:
The world is theirs; they two play out the game,
Thou standing by: and though thy glorious name
Wrought our deliverance from th' infernall pit,
Who sings thy praise? onely a skarf or glove
Doth warm our hands, and make them write of love.

Herbert states that those who have written most of love have corrupted it most. They have given the glorious title of infinite "Love," the primal source of all, to finite dust, worshipping mortal love in lieu of the immortal, fawning upon the creature rather than the creator. Man has teamed his imagination with mortal love, and has let this mortal love take sway of both his thought and feeling. Nothing has been given to immortal "Love," ironically the very creator of the poet's brain and heart. "Love" stands by while wit and beauty play their feeble game in self-consuming ignorance. Though "Love" itself saved these mortal lovers from eternal damnation in the first place, no one sings its praise. The last image of the poem is of the love poet feebly warming his hands with "only a scarf or glove." He writes of a love which falls far short of the worship he gives it; a love which is limited and "dust," just as the poet himself is "dust" without the power of infinite "Love."
The poem ends negatively, still not discovering positively a fire which could adequately warm the hands of the poet. "Love (II)"
discovers that fire.

Immortall Heat, O let thy greater flame
Attract the lesser to it, let those fires,
Which shall consume the world, first make it tame;
And kindle in our hearts such true desires,
As may consume our lusts, and make thee way.
Then shall our hearts pant thee; then shall our brain
All her invention on thine Altar lay,
And there in hymnes send back thy fire again:
Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust;
Dust blown by wit, till that they both were blinde:
Theou shalt recover all thy goods in kinde,
Who wert disseized by usurping lust;
All knees shall bow to thee; all wits shall rise,
And praise him who did make and mend our eies.

The heat to which Herbert addresses himself in this poem is the same as that found in his two early sonnets to his mother. It is that "ancient heat . . . wherewith whole shoals of martyrs once did burn". It is the heat of infinite love which contrasts with that of mortal lovers "whose fire is wild, and doth not upward go." The heat of immortal love must attract the lesser fire of mortal love. In the process, the fires of God's justice which will finally destroy the world, must first break the world to God's will. On a personal level, God's just love must consume the fire of Herbert's lusts, and make room for itself in the poet's soul. Burned free of lust, the heart and the brain which were held captive by mere mortal love and invention in "Love (I)" can properly direct themselves toward immortal love; thus making a perfect circle: man's love being directed back to its source, rather than being perverted to mortal
love. Perhaps an autobiography of sorts is here expressed by
Herbert, forecasting the "many conflicts" of his poems of affliction,
doubt and despair, culminating in the acceptance of his final "Love"
poem. "Love (II)" culminates in a conceit. The poet's eyes will
now see immortal love, eyes which before saw only "dust blown by
wit, till that they both were blind." Love, which created Herbert's
"eyes," will now mend them as well. Only immortal love makes it
possible for the poet to love in the first place, and return that
love to its source. Finally, the poet's eyes are on that smiling
"Love" of "Love (III)" who "made the eyes" and later "bore the blame"
for their marring.

In the first two "Love" poems, Herbert attacks poets who
write of mortal love, not so much because this in itself is sinful,
but because it causes them to ignore truly essential and beautiful
infinite "Love." Love poets commit the artist's ultimate sin of
not searching deeply enough for the "real," and allowing themselves
to be detoured by artifice. Herbert sees his commitment to infinite
love as the sole subject of his verse, not as a narrowing of his
sensibility, but a broadening, especially when compared to those
secular love poets who ignore the essence of love for its mere
human appearance; who are indeed blinded by dust.

The first stanza of "Jordan (I)" further develops Herbert's
notion of the limited vision of secular poetry.

Who sayes that fictions onely and false hair
Become a verse? Is there in truth no beautie?
Is all good structure in a winding stair?
May no lines passe, except they do their dutie
Not to a true, but painted chair?
An analysis of this poem could concentrate on Herbert's attack against devious and complicated styles of poetry; the structure found "in a winding stair." Herbert obviously emphasises this concern in the second stanza.

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

However, Herbert does not primarily attack the stylistic techniques of his contemporary secular poets, but their lack of imaginative insight regarding the subject of their poems. The opening lines of "Jordan (I)" criticize those who concentrate on fiction rather than truth. Must all poets focus on imitation rather than essence? This is the central argument of Herbert's poem, and recalls his complaints of the first two "Love" poems. The "enchanted groves" and "sudden arbours" are typical of the involved technique of the secular poets, a style which "vailed" the sense, and bogged down the poet's mind in stylistic questions at the expense of thought and true emotion. But the cliches of the second stanza demonstrate not only the shortcomings of involved technique, but the limitations of the artificial subjects they represent. Artifice hides the truth. These poets worship nature, at least as represented by trite groves, arbours, and streams, instead of the God of nature, the source of all that is true and beautiful. Again, Herbert does not criticize secular poetry in itself as much as he belittles it for its shortcomings in neglecting what to him is the truly real; the vision of God and the world of
grace, of which the secular world is but a reflection, supremely useful only when it leads the mind into the world of God's grace. In symbolically titling his "Jordan" poems, Herbert calls attention to the waters of the first baptism, and implies the baptism of his poetry, enrolling it in the service of reality, the reality of the infinite.

For as thou dost impart thy grace,
The greater shall our glorie be.
The measure of our joyes is in this place,
The stuffe with thee.

Herbert does not wish to silence the shepherds' singing. They are "honest," perhaps unlike the pastoral poets who were Herbert's predecessors and contemporaries. However, he does not envy any "man's nightingale or spring," for he knows God's love transcends all these "painted chairs" and is prime. The simplicity of the shepherds is one thing; the simplicity Herbert seeks is another. It is not only simplicity of language and logic. It is the simplicity (and strength) of the one, the real, the first cause; the first link in the chain of being which holds all others in order; the true, not painted chair. It is that simplicity which sets the planets spinning—God's love.

Considering his subject, Herbert can perhaps allow the secular poet to be tricky and devious for that poet's subject is merely a reflection of true reality. But Herbert cannot permit such artificiality in his own poetry. The simple purity of his subject will not allow it.

"The Quidditie" can best demonstrate the simple communication with
God Herbert sought in his poetry.

My God, a verse is not a crown,
No point of honour, or gay suit,
No hawk, or banquet, or renown,
Nor a good sword, nor yet a lute;

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

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

Here again Herbert is demonstrating what he feels is essential in man's life. The title is taken from a term which originally meant the essence of a thing, but which had been corrupted by Herbert's time to mean an overfineness of distinction, the result of schoolmen's games. In the poem Herbert perhaps wants us to call to mind the absurdity of this scholastic wrangling which only obscures, just as the secular poet often obscures his sense with labyrinthial reasoning. But he does leave us with a statement of what is the essence of his poetry, after discarding all the superficial riches of the secular world. The essence of his verse is the essence of the world already elaborated upon in the "Love" poems--the presence of God's love. What is necessary for Herbert is communion with God, and his poetry is successful when it attains this communion. In his poetry God wins him, and he wins God: "... it is that which while I use I am with thee, and most take all."

The impression of the dramatic sensed by a reader of Herbert's
poetry can perhaps be attributed to the facts stated in "The Quidditie;" that is, that Herbert's attaining a presence with God during the actual event of the composition of his poems was of prime importance to him. Herbert saw as central to the import he placed on his verse-writing, the powers of his poetic mind to concentrate and organize his thoughts and feelings towards communion with God. Happily, Herbert could pass on this intensity of thought and feeling to others through his poetry. However, this union with God while in the throes of poetic endeavor was not the only worth Herbert found in his poetry. As I have already indicated in discussing Herbert's poetics in light of "Jordan (II)" and The Country Parson, he felt his poetry could instruct others as well, and a study of Herbert's poem "The Forerunners" will give further evidence of this didacticism. In "The Quidditie," the poet-parson's concern with instruction is not explicit. But it certainly is present in the fact that it, and all three of the poems just discussed are meant to be instructive to the reader.

So, several conclusions can be drawn as regards Herbert's poetic concerns. First, he felt the proper subject of his poetry to be that which was most real, most essential—God's love. Secondly, he knew that the way to reach this essential reality was to be simple and unburdened in his thought, feeling, and expression, not letting his mind be detoured by the superficial realities of mortal love and the world's beauty without sensing the essential love and beauty behind it. Further, not only could he see his poetry as instructive to
others, he recognized it as a valuable method of attaining his personal contact with God. It is the reader's recognition of this drama in his poetry which helps to make the instruction believable.

All this, however, does not solve the many problems which arise from a commitment to write simple and heartfelt poetry to God. The problems Herbert confronted in his dedication to religious poetry have already been shown in discussing "Jordan (II)." How can man dare say his art and thoughts are worth anything in conversation with God? How can the poet's beauty stand in the presence of infinite beauty? How can he avoid the terrible sin of "spiritual pride" and still write polished verse? How can he presume upon God's grace in such a manner as to say "I can compose some truly beautiful thoughts?" How can man create for the God of creation? It is because "The Forerunners" compiles all these problems, and looks at them, as it were, in retrospect, that I feel it can best serve as an introduction into all of Herbert's poems, and is my first choice for analysis as enlightened by reference to The Country Parson.

"The Forerunners" revolves around a conceit of a royal progress whose advance agents, or harbingers, have marked with chalk the doors of required lodgings. But the King is God, and Herbert's body is the site of the lodgings:

The harbingers are come. See, see their mark;
White is their colour, and behold my head.
But must they have my brain? must they dispark
Those sparkling notions, which therein were bred?
Must dulnesse turn me to a clod?
Yet have they left me, 'Thou art still my God.'
Good men ye be, to leave me my best room,
Ev'n all my heart, and what is lodged there:
I passe not, I, what of the rest become,
So 'Thou art still my God,' be out of fear.
He will be pleased with that dittie,
And if I please him, I write fine and wittie.

Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors.
But will ye leave me thus? when ye before
Of stews and brothels onely knew the doores,
Then did I wash you with my tears, and more,
Brought you to Church well drest and clad,
My God must have my best, ev'n all I had.

Lovely enchanting language, sugar-cane,
Hony of roses, whither wilt thou flie?
Hath some fond lover tie'd thee to thy bane?
And wilt thou leave the Church, and love a stie?
Fie, thou wilt soil thy broider'd coat,
And hurt thy self, and him that sings the note.

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 to light us thither.
Beautie and beauteous words should go together.

Yet if you go, I passe not; take your way:
For, 'Thou art still my God,' is all that ye
Perhaps with more embellishment can say.
Go birds of spring: let winter have his fee;
Let a bleak palenesse chalk the doore,
So all within be liveller then before. (The Forerunners)

Before relating the poem to The Country Parson, let us consider
the poem on its own. God's forerunners have marked Herbert's head
with white, dulling his brain. Yet two things have been left to
Herbert: the phrase "Thou art still my God;" and his best room, his
heart. Thus he cares little that the "sparkling notions" of his
brain, the "sweet phrases" of the poet have deserted him. The brain
of "Love (II)" which Herbert feels should "all her invention on thine
"Immortal Love) altar lay" is readily given up. The single phrase left him is beyond it because it pleases God, and thus is "fine and witty."

Superficially, the thought of the poem does not seem complicated. However, when one considers that here Herbert has written a poem about the inadequacy of conventional poems, a certain paradox becomes apparent. Further, in the very act of belittling the language of secular love poetry, Herbert uses some of the most sensual language in his poetry:

Lovely enchanting language, sugar-cane
Honey of roses . . .

As Arnold Stein has pointed out, even the phrase "Thou art still my God," used in the poem to symbolize pure, unadorned statement to God, works within the context of the poem, balanced by other poetic statements. Although the poem purports to demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the phrase "Thou art still my God," the fact remains that it stands only when supported by the argument of the poem. What Herbert understood to be the height of poetic achievement when addressing God, and what he actually achieved in "The Forerunners," are two different, though related things. He aims for pure, unadorned contact with God, but because of his human nature, can come close to achieving it only through man's limited reasoning and finite words. Unlike the angels of his poem "In Anglos" (ll. 9-13), Herbert cannot see spiritual reality directly, but must approach it through

18 Stein, pp. 18-19.
the limitations of his own human form.

The suggestions for the pastor found in *The Country Parson* seem to shed some light on Herbert's quandary as a religious poet, and the seeming self-contradiction of "The Forerunners." As I have already shown, the poet-parson has a double duty: to praise God and to offer edification for his fellow man. For the parson, pleasing God means feeding his flock "diligently and faithfully, since our Saviour hath made that the argument of a Pastour's love ..." (p. 224, 11. 4-5). Thus, as Herbert previously indicated in his letter to Ferrar, the poems do not stand solely as expressions of the poet to his God, but serve a didactic purpose as well. A bare statement such as "Thou art still my God" probably would not "turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul;" but when placed in the context of the whole poetic argument it might serve handsomely. What is necessary for the reader's appreciation of Herbert's plain statement is the understanding of the whole thought process leading up to that final exclamation.

For a sensitive religious person such as Herbert, the problem was to steer the middle way between the lack of poetic form, and the worship of it, just as the parson had to tread the path between "slovenliness" and "superstition" in the decoration of his Church. In creating his poems as means of helping others reach God, he would be hypocritical to place himself as a poet between the heart of a man and the love of God. His poetry, his "lovely metaphors," should not get in the way of this contact, for if he valued his insight and the words that expressed that insight above the grace of
God, he would fall victim to that "ghostly enemy" of the parson's state of life, spiritual pride. Creating superb poetic form while avoiding any semblance of self-pride in his creation presented a dilemma for Herbert.

The Country Parson offers guidelines for the poet-parson to follow in this dilemma. Perhaps the most important of these guidelines is the parson's realization of the primal source of his religious insight—God Himself. The first words of The Country Parson stress Herbert's dependence on God for all insight:

"Being desirous (Thorou the Mercy of God) to please Him, for whom I am, and live, and who giveth mee my Desires and Performances ... I have resolved to set down the Form and Character of a true Pastour ..." (p. 224, ll. 1-7).

The treatise continually falls back on the parson's dependence on God, not only in its demonstrating the proper frame of mind for the pastor, but in apologizing, as it were, even for the book's own existence. As Herbert states in "The Author's Prayer before Sermon" which concludes The Country Parson, God must first awake the parson's Lute, and "... Violl awake all his powers to glorify thee," before he can preach sincerely and well (p. 289, ll. 9-10).

Perhaps then, the parson-poet can glory in his poetic achievement and still avoid spiritual pride if in his poems he recognizes that it is God's grace, not the poet's skill, that shines through each line of poetry.

In writing a poem such as "The Forerunners," Herbert looks two ways—towards God, realizing man's inadequacy when confronted
with God's perfection; and towards man (himself included) and the need to make clear to himself and others the justice and glory of God's plan for man's redemption. However, with visions of the infinite, man still must limit himself to a finite world. This two-way view underlies the paradoxical tension of "The Forerunners," and is more explicitly expressed in "The Temper (I)"

Wilt thou meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch
A crumme of dust from heav'n to hell?
Will great God measure with a wretch? (11. 13-15)

As I have indicated, man's solving this paradox begins with his surrendering his will to God, as he realizes the source of all his insight. But this is still not a practical solution. Herbert, in The Country Parson, warns against the "prying into" such "high speculative and unprofitable questions" as imprudent scholars are given to (p. 238, 11. 18-20). More practical solutions are called for, and The Country Parson demonstrates them.

To write well in God's service, the poet need only take a cue from God's word already written, the Holy Scripture. Many of the "homely" images, so much a mark of Herbert's poetry, have their source here. For as Herbert remarks in The Country Parson, the Scriptures show that these images, such as "the naming of a plough, a hatchet, a bushell, leaven, boyes piping and dancing" have their place in religious literature. "Washed, and cleansed," they can be used as metaphors to show the way even to "Heavenly Truths." Thus Herbert, like many of his predecessors in the area of religious
writing, can use a conceit such as that of the royal progress in
"The Forerunners," because God's Word, the Bible, has demonstrated
that such a technique is acceptable. A metaphor, such as the making
of a room out of a heart, can lead men to "Heavenly Truths."

In addition to the example of Scripture, Herbert can justify the
parson-poet's use of metaphor on still another level. Herbert
believed that Providential God established in the finite world many
"monuments of his Doctrine," which could lift the drudging hearts
of man up to Heaven (p. 261, ll. 21-22). All the poet need do is
recognize these metaphorical possibilities through the grace of
God and pass them on through his poems. Using these metaphors
Herbert glorifies God's plan, not his own ingenuity.

The language to be used in such poems as "The Forerunners"
could perhaps be related to the language Herbert directs his
parson to use in his sermons.19 Above all, Herbert says, the
character of the parson's sermon is Holiness.

... he is not witty, or learned, or eloquent,
but Holy. A character that Hermogones
never dreamt of, and therefore he could give no
precepts thereof (p. 233, ll. 23-26).

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19 It might be argued that sermons and poems are two different
genres, and what Herbert says about sermons has no bearing on his
idea of good poetry. However, as already exhibited, Herbert saw
his poems as sermons, as a means of showing the way to a dejected
poor soul, and thus an intentional similarity between Herbert's
ideas on good sermonizing and good poetry might be said to exist.
The means by which the parson attains this holiness are several. First, he chooses "texts of Devotion, not Controversie, moving and ravishing texts, whereof the Scriptures are full" (p. 233, ll. 26-28). The tone of Herbert's poems, including that of "The Forerunners," is always somewhat resolved. The conclusions are foregone. The commitment to God, culminating in the phrase "Thou art still my God," is never in doubt. All references to another conclusion have either never existed or have been carefully edited out, as perhaps indicated in Herbert's attempt to eliminate that in his poetry which might not "turn to the advantage of any poor soul."

This does not mean that "The Forerunners" is not dramatic. Quite the contrary. As Herbert continues to tell his parson, "holiness" is gained in a sermon "by dipping, and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts before they come into our mouths, truly affecting, and cordially expressing all that we say; so that the auditors may plainly perceive that every word is hart deep" (p. 233, ll. 23-32). In "The Forerunners" the sincere language pushes forth the intensity of the feeling just as this language is meant to aid the parson in his preaching. The parson "being first affected himself . . . may affect also his people . . ." (p. 231, ll. 12-13). The language of "The Forerunners" is, if anything, heartfelt. It deals not with theory and speculation, but with "stews and brothels" "sties" and "dung," and satiric use of the cliches of "sugar cane," and "hony of roses."

Still another means of the parson's attaining "holiness" in
his sermons, is his technique of

...turning often, and making many Apostrophes to God, as, Oh Lord blesse my people, and teach them this point; or, Oh my Master, on whose errand I come, let me hold my peace, and doe thou speak thy selfe; for thou art Love, and when thou teachest, all are Scholars. Some such irradiations scatteringly in the Sermon, carry great holiness in them (p. 233, ll. 32-37; p. 234, ll. 1-2).

Many of Herbert's poems contain such "apostrophes," and "The Forerunners" is based upon one. In fact, the statement "Thou art still my God" takes on added significance when compared to the above apostrophes, which directly state the parson's dependence on God for his preaching abilities, just as the statement from "The Forerunners" implicitly shows the poet's dependence on God for any finally meaningful expression. I might further add that in light of his intense poetry, Herbert's statements in The Country Parson, such as the apostrophes just quoted, lose some of their "quaintness" and take on added depth. For the reader, the portrait of the parson is no longer one of naive holiness, but of a man who has seen the deathly white mark of the harbingers on his own head and has known torture in his sensitive mind.

EMPLOYMENT

In addition to containing pastoral criteria which shed light on the techniques Herbert used in his poetry, The Country Parson provides a valuable cross-reference for the studying of the
individual themes of many of the poems of *The Temple*. For example, *The Country Parson* often expounds upon the problem of employment, a situation with which Herbert deals often in *The Temple*.

It is known that in his early thirties Herbert had as yet no firmly-established vocation. That such a situation was a traumatic experience for him can be ascertained not only from his poems on employment in *The Temple*, but from his later comments on employment in *The Country Parson*:

> The great and nationall sin of this land he esteems to be Idlenesse; great in it selfe, and great in Consequence: For when men have nothing to do, they fall to drink, to steal, to whore, to scoffe, to revile, to all sorts of gamings. Come, say they, we have nothing to do, lets go to the Tavern or to the stews, or what not. Wherefore the Parson strongly opposeth this sin, wheresoever he goes. And because Idleness is two-fold, the one in having no calling, the other in walking carelessly in our calling, he first represents to every body the necessity of a vocation. The reason of this assertion is taken from the nature of man, wherein God hath placed instruments, Reason in the soul, and a hand in the Body, as engagements of working: So that even in Paradise man had a calling, and how much more out of Paradise, when the evils which he is now subject unto may be prevented, or diverted by reasonable employment (p. 274, ll. 8-24).

The person without employment was in serious straits. All types of temptations and degradations confronted him. To a person of Herbert's temperament, to be without employment could mean that God had denied him grace, and that the path to damnation was all that was ordained for him. Perhaps too, God had called and Herbert had missed it. Either way, salvation might have been lost. God had not chosen him. No wonder, then, the great concern voiced by Herbert in his "Employment" poems:
For as thou dost impart thy grace,
The greater shall our glorie be.
The measure of our joyes is in this place,
      The stuffe with thee.

Let me not languish then, and spend
A life as barren to thy praise,
As is the dust, to which that life doth tend,
      But with delays.

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. (Employment (I), 11. 9-24)

Not in God's great chain, in company only with weeds, Herbert
begs God to grant him the grace to find employment. However, the
poem is not one of despair. A full consideration of Herbert's
comments on unemployment in The Country Parson would indicate that
unemployment may give man some cause for hope. For as Herbert
argues, although one may not already have a definite vocation, "if
he truly, and seriously prepare for it, he is safe and within
bounds." As Herbert continues:

... ingenuous and fit employment is never wanting to those
that seek it .... All are either presently to enter into
a Calling, if they be fit for it, and it for them; or else to
examine with care, and advice, what they are fittest for, and
to prepare for that with all dilligence (p. 275, 11. 14-17).

Herbert could assume that his sincere desire for employment, and
his willingness to do whatever necessary to prepare for that
vocation, were signs that God's grace had been granted him.
"Employment (I)" implicitly demonstrates that this grace has been granted Herbert, for the poem itself could be said to be the "one strain" given to Herbert's "poore reed." Certainly Herbert, in his sincere concern over his own lack of employment in the poems, could not be equated with the typical idle "gallant," whom he chastizes in *The Country Parson*, "who is witty enough . . . to ask, if he shall mend shoes, or what he shall do" (p. 275, ll. 6-8). In this light the lines of "Employment (I)," seem rather hopeful. Though Herbert indicates that he has not been given the grace to work constructively for himself and his God, it must be assumed that his willingness to prepare for that time when employment is consummated is the first indication that the grace has been granted.

But Herbert's concept of employment goes beyond this realization, as demonstrated in "Employment (II)" as well as in *The Country Parson*.

In "Employment (II)," Herbert immediately separates himself from those who would desire a passive, idle life.

He that is weary, let him sit.
My soul would stirre
And trade in courtesies and wit,
Quitting the furre
To cold complexions needing it.

He is not tired of life, but enthused by it, or at least desires as much. He supports his enthusiasm by showing that it is essential to man's nature.

Man is no starre, but a quick coal
Of mortall fire.
Who blows it not, nor doth controll
A faint desire,
Lets his own ashes choke his soul.

When th' elements did for place contest
With him, whose will
Ordain'd the highest to be best;
The earth sat still,
And by the others is opprest.

Man is "mortall fire." Unlike a star, he will die out if he does not always blow the feeble embers of his soul. His fire is a gift that must be constantly and properly tended. Further, the universe cautions through its example against inaction. God ordained earth to be the lowest of elements, for it sat still when all others contested for place. Likewise, man condemns himself to the lowest link in God's chain if he makes no effort to move to a higher place. Through inaction he chooses his own lot.

Thus:

Life is a businesse, not good cheer;
Ever in warres.

We are not on earth to relax and enjoy, but to prove ourselves through constant battle against both the shortcomings in ourselves and those forces in the world which oppose us. Again taking a cue from nature, we can see that nothing lies idle. Though covered by clouds or the earth's shadow at night, the sun still shines somewhere. The stars, too, constantly stand ready to appear from behind a cloud, or out of a darkening sky.

Having shown the need for man to be active, Herbert goes on to wish he were one of God's creatures which would easily find the
ability to employ itself.

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.

But this is not a valid desire, and perhaps realizing this, Herbert does not develop it further. He knows he is a man, not an orange-tree, and to wish he were something he is not is as much an attempt to escape from the reality of conflict here on earth as is the laziness of "he that is weary" and would sit. Further, wishing he were a plant shows the rather foolish desire of lowering himself in the chain of being, and contradicts his earlier expressed aim of pulling himself up the chain to his highest possible level.

So at first glance, the poem seems to end unresolved. He presents his problem adequately, but offers no explicit solution, unless the feeble desire to be something he is not can be considered a solution. But in the last stanza of the poem, as in "Employment (I);" Herbert does imply a solution.

But we are still too young or old;
The Man is gone,
Before we do our wares unfold;
    So we freeze on,
Untill the grave increase our cold.

Herbert reaches a very important conclusion. While he has been complaining about his unemployment, while he has been scrupulously examining and discarding as unfit for one of his status this and that form of employment, he has been moving ever closer to the grave. "We are still too young or old" and before we can do something for
ourselves and God, displaying our worth to Him, we have missed the chance. Ironically, Herbert knows he is wasting away his life in the very act of overly worrying that he might waste it away. His indecision means inactivity. He finally realizes that his fretting and ridiculous wishing in the poem have gotten him nowhere. Herbert solves his problem by realizing that what he has been doing is to no avail, and this implies that he should change his approach. He can solve his unemployment by dropping his excessively punctilious approach to what is fit employment for himself and getting busy doing what he can. Unlike the orange-tree he cannot expect to blossom and bear fruit perennially. As a man he must recognize the imperfections of his own nature and employ himself accordingly, not presuming that his actions must be perfect. As Herbert states in *The Country Parson*, man should not refrain from offering his services to God, simply because they are limited and lowly. The parson "holds the rule, that Nothing is little in God's service: If it once have the honour of that Name, it grows great instantly" (p. 249, ll. 1-3). Thus the parson can stoop into even the smelliest huts when employed in God's service (p. 249, ll. 4-6). Further, as indicated in his introduction to *The Country Parson*, Herbert does not feel the imperfect parson should give up his calling, and pine away, as the poet seems to in "Employment (II)." In directing the reader in how he should enact the guidelines suggested in the pastoral treatise, Herbert says:
Herbert directs his pastor to go as far as he can in pleasing God, but not to throw away everything if he can't attain all that is suggested in the pastoral treatise. Even a pastor cannot be expected to be perfect.

Likewise the parson must recognize that he cannot expect perfection of his flock. Rather, he must recognize their imperfections, adapt to and work with them. Thus he shouldn't exceed an hour in his sermons, because quite frankly, his audience will fall asleep (p. 235, ll. 10-15). As already mentioned, neither shall the parson be loath to stooping to "homely" and quite mundane illustrations in his sermons, for these illustrations might strike a spark in an imperfect, dull mind. In speaking of the necessity of the parson's constant rewarding of his flock's virtuous behavior, Herbert recognizes man's imperfections again, saying:

For though he desire that all should live well and vertuously, not for any reward of his, but for vertue's sake; yet that will not be so: and therefore as God, although we should love him onely for his own sake, yet out of his infinite pity hath set forth heaven for a reward to draw man to Piety, and is content, if at least so, they will become good: So the Country Parson, who is a diligent observer and tracker of God's wayes sets up as many encouragements to goodnesse as he can, both in honour, and profit, and fame; that he may, if not the best way, yet any way, make his Parish good (pp. 243-244, ll. 27-32, 1-5).

All in all, The Country Parson says to its audience of preachers
"Work with what you have, no matter how low or base, for it is all man has been given."

Returning to "Employment (I)" in light of what has been said concerning the second "Employment" poem and The Country Parson, we can see that here too Herbert has resolved to work with what little he has. He does not beg God to give him glorious employment, to have him paint a masterpiece perhaps, or compose a beautiful symphony. Rather he only asks that God "give one strain to (his) poore reed," that he be able to offer something, albeit imperfect.

Inactivity caused by excessive scruples over what is fit employment is only one of the pitfalls relating to employment which Herbert discusses in his poems and The Country Parson. In his poem "Self-Condemnation" Herbert points out the adverse effects of the wrong kind of employment, a type of employment which could very easily affect his parson.

Thou who condemnest Jewish hate,  
For choosing Barrabas a murderer  
Before the Lord of glorie;  
Look back upon thine own estate,  
Call home thine eye (that busie wanderer);  
That choice may be thy storie.

He that doth love, and love amisse,  
This worlds delights before true Christian joy,  
Hath made a Jewish choice;  
The world an ancient murderer is;  
Thousands of souls it hath and doth destroy  
With her enchanting voice.

He that hath made a sorrie wedding  
Between his soul and gold, and hath preferr'd  
False gain before the true,  
Hath done what he condemnes in reading;  
For he hath sold for money his deare Lord,  
    And is a Judas-Jew.
Thus we prevent the last great day,  
And judge our selves. That light, which sin & passion  
Did before dimme and choke,  
When once those snuffes are ta'ne away,  
Shines bright and cleare, ev'n unto condemnation,  
Without excuse or cloke.

Like the Jews, man often chooses the world before God. He often employs himself in mortal affairs of love, neglecting the infinite love of God. His grubbing for gold often causes man to lose the true gold of salvation. Through employing himself only in worldly things, he judges himself, and condemns himself to everlasting divorce from the true wealth of the world, because he has never worked for it. Instead he has occupied himself with the lesser things of the murdering world, exemplifying the wrong kind of employment. This wrong kind of employment could well occupy the parson, saddled as he might be with the mundane matters of financing the operations of his church and utilizing his cramped time-schedule to its fullest. Further, the parson of Herbert's time was very much threatened by the danger of over-involvement in political affairs, being dependent for his parish's support through the good graces of the neighboring nobility. But here Herbert gives direct advice to his parson regarding this finagling for favor.

... but after a man is once Minister, he cannot agree to come into any house, where he shall not exercise what he is, unless he forsake his plough, and look back. Wherfore they are not to be ever-submissive, and base, but to keep up with the Lord and Lady of the house, and to preserve a boldness with them and all, even so farre as reproofe to their very face, when occasion calls, but seasonably and discreetly. They who do not thus, while they remember their earthly Lord, do much forget their heavenly; they wrong the Priesthood, neglect their duty, and shall be so farre from that which they
seek with their over-submissiveness, and cringings, that they
shall ever be despised. They who for the hope of promotion
neglect any necessary admonition, or reproves, sell (with
Judas) their Lord and Master (p. 226, ll. 24-38).

The parson must always place his service to God before the service of
all else if he hopes to escape the "self-condemnation" of those who
would choose "Barrabas, a murderer before the Lord of glory."

In his poem "Businesse," Herbert attacks that type of activity,
the foolish play which causes man to neglect the activity of his
soul.

Canst be idle? canst thou play,
Foolish soul who sinn'd today (p. 113, ll. 1-2)?

All else, Herbert goes on to say, is active. Rivers run and winds
still blow, despite the fact the "foolish soul" neither cries or
sighs.

But if yet thou idle be,
Foolish soul, who died for thee? (p. 113, ll. 15-16)

Here Herbert mentions the strongest case for man to be spiritually
active. If God could expend so much effort on our behalf, why
can't we make ourselves work even a little. We will spend our time
on the lesser riches of this world before we employ it towards the
great wealth God offers us.

He that loseth gold, though drosse,
Tells to all he meets, his crosse;
He that sinnes, hath he no losse?

He that findes a silver vein,
Thinks on it, and thinks again;
Brings thy Savioirs death no gain? (p. 114, ll. 31-36)

Perhaps he who fails to employ his soul actively towards its
salvation will never feel the effects of sin. But, he will never
know his salvation either. His "businesse" has led him elsewhere.
As Herbert concludes,

Who in heart not ever kneels,
Neither sinne nor Saviour feels (p. 114, l. 37-38).

Herbert, then, presents at least three lessons regarding
employment in his poems seen in light of The Country Parson. First,
he knows that full employment at all times is not possible, but
that the sincere desire to be so employed when the occasion arises
is sufficient for the man who desires salvation. Secondly, he comes
to the realization that man can waste his life away through a too
scrupulous attention towards his employment. He must recognize his
faults, and be willing to offer what he has to the service of God,
even if imperfect. Finally, Herbert knows that to be ultimately
worthwhile, employment must concern itself finally with spiritual
activity. Through the wrong kind of employment, man may gain the
world, but lose his soul in the process. Employment means working
with God in all things for our salvation. God has given us the
chance, the grace, to work our way back to Him, and it is death
to ignore that chance.

AFFLICTION

Herbert's lack of employment was but one of the several
"afflictions" to which he found himself subjected. The manner
in which these seeming afflictions can be interpreted as evidences
of God's grace can be elaborated upon through reference to Herbert's concept of "affliction" as found in his poems and in *The Country Parson*.

Herbert's "Affliction (I)" concludes "Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot, let me not love thee, if I love thee not."

This prayer for certainty separates it from the other "Affliction" poems, which end on a note of commitment and acceptance of affliction. Until the end, the tone of "Affliction (I)" never explicitly deviates from dismay. Herbert has given everything to the service of God and has received only suffering in return. In the concluding stanza of the poem he does resolve to last out the pain, but there is no statement of certainty or understanding acceptance.

Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;  
In weakness must be stout.  
Well, I will change the service, and go seek  
Some other master out.  
Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,  
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not." (1. 61-66),

The conclusions of the other "Affliction" poems are more positive, perhaps even joyous.

This lack of certainty places "Affliction (I)" in an early phase of Herbert's spiritual evolution, but this same uncertainty helps to make it a superior poem to the other four "Affliction" poems. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to not only call upon *The Country Parson* for its comments on affliction, but to analyze the other "Affliction" poems and their relationship to "Affliction (I)."

"Affliction (II)" at first appears to present the same tone of
bewildered complaint found in "Affliction (I)"

Kill me not ev'ry day,
Thou Lord of life;

But as the reader continues, he immediately notes a shift in Herbert's attitude from the earlier poem.

since thy one death for me
Is more than all my deaths can be,

In this initial sentence, Herbert shifts the tone from the near despair of "Affliction (I)" to the suffering acceptance of this poem. Though the poet still complains, he complaints from an entirely different frame of mind. In "Affliction (I)" Herbert asks of God, "Why do I have to suffer more? Haven't I suffered enough?" In "Affliction (II)" he asks "Why should I suffer? I could never suffer enough compared to your suffering." In "Affliction (I)" the poet contemplates only his own suffering. In "Affliction (II)" he contemplates Christ's suffering as well.

This inclusion of Christ's suffering in his thoughts on affliction set the final four "Affliction" poems in a higher state of Herbert's spiritual development, for they indicate a shift from the lack of understanding in "Affliction (I)" to an understanding of why man must suffer. Herbert's main problem now is to reconcile his pitiful suffering with the infinite suffering of Christ. Considering the magnitude of man's sin and the hugeness of God's justice, what small part, if any, could his pains have in the great plan for redemption? Further, Herbert recognizes his inadequacy as part of
all man's lot. In "Affliction (II)" and the "affliction" poems which follow it, he explicitly sees the inadequacy of his suffering not only individually, but as part of the suffering of the entire human race. As he continues in "Affliction (II)"

If all mens tears were let
Into one common sewer, sea, and brine;
What were they all, compar'd to thine?
Wherein if they were set,
They would discoulour thy most bloudy sweat.

The image combining men's tears with those of Christ's leads to a resolution of the problem of the poem—the inadequacy of man's suffering. Before analyzing the actual solution to this problem as given by Herbert in "Affliction (II)," it would be helpful to return to The Country Parson and briefly note how is presents the solution for the beleaguered pastor.

It is through affliction, Herbert says in The Country Parson, that "Christ himself" perfected, and continues to perfect, "our Redemption no other way, then by sorrow . . . ." Affliction is a "benefit . . . which softens, and works the stubborn heart of man." We who are afflicted can be certain "of deliverance, and reward, if we faint not." We can take solace "from the miserable comparison of the moment of grieves here with the weight of joyes hereafter" (p. 249, 11. 26-27). With consolations such as these in his mind, Herbert can paradoxically make his poems of "Affliction" occasions to rejoice. The sicknesses," "grones," "tears," and "sweat" all become instruments for rejoicing,
guarantees as it were, of redemption for each man who withstands them. Perhaps more importantly, this affliction is "a point of honour," identifying the human sufferer with the perfect sufferer, Christ. In this sense, Herbert argues in The Country Parson that the parson should be happy even to accept the specific affliction of contempt felt for him by others, "being glad, and joyfull, that hee is made conformable to his Master; and being in the world as he was, hath this undoubted pledge of his salvation" (p. 269, ll. 16-18). The truly devout person must thusly "imp" his "wing" on the suffering Christ's; then shall "affliction advance the flight" in him.

Returning to the last lines of "Affliction (II)" we see such an imping of the wing.

Thou art my grief alone,
Thou Lord conceal it not; and as thou art
    All my delight, so all my smart:
Thy crosse took up in one,
    By way of imprest, all my future mone.

In "Affliction (I)," Herbert begs for insight into his suffering. In "Affliction (II)," he finds it. In both poems, for different reasons, he feels his suffering, it itself, is meaningless. However, in the latter poem he finds the key to making it meaningful. To make the pains he feels worthwhile, Herbert need only make his suffering part of Christ's. He need only recognize himself as a small part of God's great redemptive plan. Then his affliction becomes a gift, a business invitation as it were into the ingenious scheme that God ordained through the incarnation,
crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Herbert's suffering, rightly seen, is but an extension of the suffering of Christ on the cross. Christ already paid for the redemption of many men through his death. Herbert's suffering is an indication that he's been let in on the venture, that his grief is the grief of Christ that ultimately brings delight.

"Affliction (III)" has none of the complaint of the first two "Affliction" poems. Herbert has already absorbed the knowledge he expounds in "Affliction (II)," and he actually rejoices more than he complains, for he feels his suffering as Christ within his soul.

My heart did heave, and there came forth, O God!
By that I knew that thou wast in the grief,
To guide and govern it to my relief,
Making a scepter of the rod:
Hads't thou not had thy part,
Sure the unruly sigh had broke my heart.

Herbert recognizes "the rod" as "a scepter" as well, guiding his soul to redemption in the manner outlined in *The Country Parson*: "Christ himself" perfected "our Redemption no other way, then by sorrow" (p. 249, 11. 22-23). By means of extension, Herbert can assume that the greater his suffering, the greater his gain, as Christ pushes him toward salvation. Herbert maintains that this evidence of Christ in his life is an honor.

Thy life on earth was grief, and thou art still
Constant unto it, making it to be
A point of honour, now to grieve in me,
And in thy members suffer ill.
They who lament one crosse,
Thou dying dayly, praise thee to thy losse.
Christ's death on the cross is a continuing process, for he suffers now in the sorrows of men such as Herbert. Christ dies daily in the afflictions of men as part of the great scheme of redemption, a scheme of which Herbert now feels himself part. Thus he can rejoice in the greatness of his suffering, and even indicate a willingness for more. Perhaps the reader can discern even a slight hint of braggadocio in the tone of the opening lines of "Affliction (III)" as if Herbert were saying to God "I have suffered the greatest pains and withstood them because you were in them."

Considering the "Affliction" poems in sequence, "Affliction (IV)" seems a step backward from "Affliction (III)," for in it doubt again supersedes assurance.

Broken in pieces all assunder,
  Lord, hunt me not,
  A thing forgot,
Once a poore creature, now a wonder,
  A wonder tortur'd in the space
  Betwixt this world and that of grace.

My thoughts are all a case of knives,
  Wounding my heart
  With scatter'd smart,
As watring pots give flowers their lives.
  Nothing their furie can controll,
  While they do wound and pink my soul.

All my attendants are at strife,
  Quitting their place
  Unto my face;
Nothing performs the task of life:
  The elements are let loose to fight,
  And while I live, trie out their right.
Oh help, my God! let not their plot
Kill them and me,
And also thee,
Who art my life: dissolve the knot,
As the sunne scatters by his light
All the rebellions of the night.

Then shall those powers, which work for grief,
Enter thy pay,
And day by day
Labour thy praise, and my relief;
With care and courage building me,
Till I reach heav’n, and much more, thee.

In this poem Herbert has lost the self-assurance evident in "Affliction (III)." He still holds the understanding regarding redemption he reached in "Affliction (II)," but now he seems to be double-guessing. He gives no evidence that he doesn’t understand the relationship of affliction to his own salvation; he feels rather that he has lost or will lose his identification with Christ in that suffering. Perhaps he has contemplated the "wonder" of man and the redemptive scheme so long that the easier acceptance of "Affliction (III)" has become clouded by speculation. Thus his "thoughts are all a case of knives." The image relating the sprinklings of blood to a watering pot raises a paradox however. The watering pot is beneficial to the flowers. Thus, Herbert also sees the sprinklings of blood resulting from his thoughts wounding his heart, as beneficial; just as he speaks of the "honor" of his suffering in "Affliction (III)," for this suffering could be his ticket to ultimate salvation.

But, as already determined in "Affliction (II)" this suffering must be united with Christ’s to be worthwhile, and it is
this unity with Christ which Herbert's afflicted thoughts have doubted. God must unravel his "knot" and set his suffering aright again. Then affliction becomes a benefit, and enters the "pay" of God, both to His praise, and Herbert's benefit.

However, even in this poem of prayer for union with God, Herbert does not entirely divorce the suffering he feels from the suffering of Christ within him:

Oh help, my God! let not their plot
Kill them and me,
And also thee,
Who art my life.

Herbert has so well absorbed the doctrine of affliction that he sees even the mental affliction of doubt over his inclusion in this scheme of redemption as part of the shared sufferings of Christ. In this light, the poem itself may be one of the "knots" in his mind brought on by the mental affliction he experiences. Not only will he lose if he gives in to his doubts, but Christ will lost within him.

"Affliction (V)" contains little of the personal conflict found in "Affliction (I)" and evidenced in the other "Affliction" poems to a lesser degree. Rather, Herbert gives a summary of the concept of affliction from a more external and universal viewpoint. Rather than speaking of his own torments, he talks of the affliction of the entire human race, the reason for it, the evidence of it, and the final benefits for all mankind.
My God, I read this day,
That planted Paradise was not so firm,
As was and is thy flowing Art; whose stay
And anchor thou art only, to confirm
And strengthen it in ev'ry age,
When waves do rise, and tempests rage.

At first we liv'd in pleasure;
Thine own delights thou didst to us impart;
When we grew wanton, thou didst use displeasure
To make us thine: yet that we might not part,
As we at first did board with thee,
Now thou wouldst taste our miserie.

There is but joy and grief;
If either will convert us, we are thine:
Some Angels us'd the first; if our relief
Take up the second, then thy double line
And sev'ral baits in either kinde
Furnish thy table to thy minde.

Affliction then is ours;
We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more,
While blustering windes destroy the wanton bowres,
And ruffle all their curious knots and and store,
By God, so temper joy and wo,
That thy bright beams may tame thy bow.

This poem recognizably reviews all the aspects of affliction Herbert has discovered in the preceding poems and thus requires little interpretation. The tone is very near to that of the passages I've already quoted from The Country Parson. God himself is the anchor to the Ark, which is his Church made up of members he has confirmed and strengthened through affliction. As a result of man's sin, God, furnishing the table to his mind, chose grief, rather than the angel's joy, to return man to Him. Joy had already failed in Paradise as man did not ultimately desire God through this gift. Now the gift of suffering might
return him better. God has seen fit to strengthen man, because of his nature, as he strengthens trees, "whom shaking fastens more."

Thus, to man, woe becomes joy. Affliction is God's wrath tamed, for it ultimately blesses man with union with God. God's bow of wrath becomes the rainbow of God's presence following the storm of affliction.

Returning again to a consideration of "Affliction (I)," we can recall that Herbert has dedicated his poetry to the praise of God and the edification of his fellow man. If "Affliction (I)" is total dismay, then we can well ask why Herbert did not destroy the poem, for how could such a poem praise God? If we look again at the last line of the poem, it is possible to notice a certain tentativeness in the conclusion, a realization that this dismay isn't the final word, but rather a bridge to deeper understanding. "Let me not love thee, if I love thee not" not only shows a present uncertainty, but implies a future certainty, an understanding that God will solve the problem when He sees fit. The lines immediately previous to those just quoted shift from a statement of patience--"I must be meek; in weakness must be stout"--to impatience: "I will change the service, and go seek some other master out." The last lines do not "solve" the conflict, but only ask for a solution. The whole effect is largely tentative. The truth of the matter is that Herbert hasn't set up the problem so that it can be solved, as it is in the other "Affliction" poems. Only in balancing off the first "Affliction" poems with its counterparts in The Temple, and
in noting the statements made in *The Country Parson* on affliction can the reader see much in the poem that would turn to the advantage of the dejected poor soul. Obviously, "Affliction (I)" presents "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that had passed betwixt God and (Herbert's) soul, before (he) could subject his to the will of Jesus (his) Master."²⁰ Implied in the tentativeness of the conclusion, and shown explicitly in *The Country Parson*, is this happy "subjection of the will" to God. Herbert, however, is not the tree he wishes he were in "Affliction (I)." "I read, and sigh, and wish I were a tree; for sure then I should grow to fruit . . . ." He is a man, and the ways of providence have ordained that he must suffer actively as a man. This is precisely what Herbert demonstrates in "Affliction (I)"—active suffering. To recognize immediately a solution to his suffering, a reason for his affliction, would soften the pain he feels. Indeed, the reader could well doubt if Herbert suffered at all. To use an analogy, he would be like a man whose hands are cold, but knows he only has to walk through the front door of his house to warm them up. Suffering with an end in sight perhaps isn't suffering at all. But the reader can detect none of the understanding acceptance of the other four "Affliction" poems in "Affliction (I)." The entire poem is of torture. Communicating this torture, truly feeling it through his words, is the problem

²⁰Walton, p. 314, cited by Bottrall, p. 40. Here Walton cites the letter to Ferrar, which Herbert sent along with the manuscript of his *Temple* poems.
Herbert solved so well in the poem. If all his "Affliction" poems tended towards acceptance of the suffering, then his suffering might not appear as real, as heartfelt as it does in The Temple. Perhaps the "Affliction" poems would be mere exercises in cool rhetoric, and would not satisfy the reader, or for that matter the questioning mind of Herbert himself. Would not Herbert question the sincerity of his own affliction, if he always and constantly felt it a blessing and joy? Would the mind that produced thoughts "all a case of knives" feel that it had suffered at all if it never lost sight of the happy ending? The Country Parson gives evidence of how important sincerity is, not only in the parson's understanding himself, but also in his leading his people. The parson-poet is always truly "first affected himself" so that he "may affect also his people" (p. 231, ll. 12-13). "Affliction (I)" affects the reader because of his sensing the sincerity of the poet who produced it.

MORTIFICATION

Closely allied to the concept of "affliction" for Herbert was that of "mortification," the purposeful self-denial of much that man could consider lively, but that was in reality deadening. In The Country Parson, Herbert states that the parson must constantly practice "mortification in regard of lusts and affections, and the stupefying and deading of all the clamorous powers of the soul."
Acting in this manner, the parson might be "an absolute Master and commander of himself, for all the purposes which God hath ordained him" (p. 227, ll. 5-10). The poem "Mortification" takes on added dimension when held up to statements from The Country Parson.

How soon doth man decay!
When clothes are taken from a chest of sweets
To swaddle infants, whose young breath
Scarce knows the way;
Those clouds are little winding sheets,
Which do consigne and send them unto death.

When boyes go first to bed,
They step into their voluntarie graves,
Sleep bindes them fast; onely their breath
Takes them not dead;
Successive nights, like rolling waves,
Convey them quickly, who are bound for death.

When youth is frank and free,
And calls for musick, while his veins do swell,
All day exchanging mirth and breath
In companie;
That musick summons to the knell,
Which shall befriend him at the houre of death.

When man grows staid and wise,
Getting a house and home, where he may move
Within the circle of his breath,
Schooling his eyes;
That dumbe inclosure maketh love
Unto the coffin, that attends his death.

When age grows low and weak,
Marking his grave, and thawing ev'ry yeare,
Till all do melt, and drom his breath
When he would speak;
A chair or litter shows the bier,
Which shall convey him to the house of death.

Man, ere he is aware,
Hath put together a solemnitie,
And drest his herse, while he has breath
As yet to spare;
Yet Lord, instruct us so to die,
That all these dyings may be life in death.
In this poem Herbert has noted how every step of man's life reminds him of not only his inadequacies, but his mortality. But the feigned deaths of the poem serve a beneficial purpose, for the lesson of mortality learned from them can fashion man up for the higher life to which God can destine him. In truth, all life is a deadening process. All those things which seem so vibrant "knell" their own deaths. The Country Parson deals in a parabolic manner with man's choice of these temporal enjoyments themselves over the eternal pleasures promised by God.

Ironically, it is the man who places too great an emphasis on the apparently vibrant things in this life, and who refuses mortification, who is truly deadening himself. Mortification, as Herbert indicates in The Country Parson, lets man keep command of himself, and fashions him for a life beyond death, for it belittles the "fleshly" part of human nature that distracts man from his highest goal, and allows him to fasten his mind on the heights which God has promised him. Thus, throughout The Country Parson, Herbert warns his pastor not to fall prey to pride in his person; not to, for example, give solace only to "those of high
social status, but to enter freely into communion with those of low status.

... (N)either disdaineth he to enter into the poorest Cottage, though he even creep into it, and though it smell never so lothsomly. For both God is there also, and those for whom God dyed; and so much the rather doth he so, as his access to the poor is more comfortable, then to the rich; and in regard of himselfe, it is more humiliation (p. 249, ll. 4-9).

Not only does the parson not avoid humiliation, he seeks it out, and rejoices in it, for it is humiliation which instructs him in his own mortality.

The fact that Christ himself kept company with the poor and sinful was instructive to Herbert as regards mortification. Mary Magdalene was perhaps the best known of the sinners attracted to Christ. Herbert writes of her example in one of his poems.

When blessed Marie wip'd her Saviours feet,  
(Whose precepts she had trampled on before)  
And wore them for a jewell on her head,  
Shewing his steps should be the street,  
Wherein she thenceforth evermore  
With pensive humblenesse would live and tread:

She being stain'd her self, why did she strive  
To make him clean, who could not be defil'd?  
Why kept she not her tears for her own faults,  
And not his feet? Though we could dive  
In tears like seas, our sinnes are pil'd  
Deeper then they, in words, and works, and thoughts.

Deare soul, she knew who did vouchsafe and deigne  
To bear her filth; and that her sinnes did dash  
Ev'n God himselfe: wherefore she was not loth,  
As she had brought wherewith to stain,  
So to bring in wherewith to wash;  
And yet in washing one, she washed both. (Marie Magdalene).
The poem demonstrates right and wrong attitudes towards mortification. The first two stanzas indicate a danger in the process of man's mortifying himself. Perhaps if man were to dwell upon his inadequacy and "filth" long enough he would come to consider himself never worthy of contact with Christ. Mary Magdalene was filthy, a sinner. How dare she presume to clean Christ's feet? She should turn her towel upon herself, finding plenty of dirt there to clean, and never strive to go beyond it. And, all men are as unworthy as she, considering the depths of their sins.

But, Herbert goes on to negate this attitude in his concluding lines. Christ came to earth for the very purpose of sharing in the guilt of sinful man. He made the initial approach, not Mary. Further, man's sins injure not only himself, but God. Thus it is only right that he move to take away the filth and contact God through his mortification. As already pointed out in Herbert's comments on affliction in both his poems and *The Country Parson*, the process by which the sinner returns to God is a scheme ordained by God himself. Thus Mary should feel no presumption in her washing of Christ's feet. It was Christ who made the offer.

In "The Storm" Herbert parallels in himself the presumption of Mary in throwing her sins at Christ.

If as the winde and waters here below
Do flie and flow,
My sighs and tears as busie were above;
Sure they would move
And much affect thee, as tempestuous times
Amaze poore mortals, and object their crimes.
Starres have their storms, ev'n in a high degree,
As well as we.
A throbbing conscience spurred by remorse
Hath a strange force:
It quits the earth, and mounting more and more
Dares to assault thee, and besiege thy doore.
There it stands knocking, to thy musicks wrong
And drowns the song.
Glorie and honour are set by, till it
An answer get.
Poets have wrong'd poore storms: such dayes are best;
They purge the aire without, within the breast.

As I've already indicated, the concepts of mortification and
affliction are closely aligned. However, through mortification
man consciously brings deadening and suffering upon himself,
while through affliction he is acted upon by God, and bears
the pain more than he enacts it. Thus all mortification would
tend towards presumption if the man in the first place did not
realize that mortification is in effect a blessing given him by
God in his plan for the salvation of men. With this in mind,
Herbert's magnificent confessions in "The Storm" escape the sin
of presumption for he is not claiming to be able to dump his
sins on his own, but sees the confession of his unworthiness as
God's grace working within him, cleansing his soul, just as a
storm cleanses the atmosphere. Herbert's "throbbing conscience"
builds like a huge thunderhead and "dares to assault" God,
even amid the terrestrial music. Such a storm is a good thing.
It purges the poet's soul so he can prepare for God's answer.
Ironically, man must first proclaim his unworthiness before he
can become worthy. This is the gist, it would seem, of Herbert's idea of mortification. This is the plan God ordained. Man's sins are huge. His depths are bottomless. His mortification must match the intensity.

In "The Priesthood" Herbert again returns to the concept of mortification.

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.

He is "foul and brittle" clay, too weak to wear the power of the clergy which can lift man to heaven or throw him down to hell. His type of clay can't be shaped into much of anything, let alone a vessel of God. But mortal potters have done amazing things with the lowest earth.

Yet have I often seen, by cunning hand
And force of fire, what curious things are made
Of wretched earth. Where once I scorn'd to stand,
That earth is fitted by the fire and trade
Of skilfull artists, for the boards of those
Who make the bravest shows.

But since those great ones, be they ne're so great,
Come from the earth, from whence those vessels come;
So that at once both feeder, dish, and meat
Have one beginning and one finall sume;
I do not greatly wonder at the sight,
   If earth in earth delight.
Yet the "brave" feaster, the feast, and the vessel which serves the feast are all from dirt and will return to it. So no real contrast in worth exists between the three. No special wonder abounds in the fact that a king can love a lump of clay. But the relationship of the priest to God is different.

But th' holy men of God such vessels are,  
As serve him up, who all the world commands:  
When God vouchsafeth to become our fare,  
Their hands convey him, who conveys their hands.  
O what pure things, most pure must those things be,  
Who bringe my God to me!

Only the purest vessel can dare hold God within it, for God is not dust like itself, but rather the very source of its existence. Somehow, the vessel must be purified. Herbert shows how in the final lines of the poem.

Wherefore I dare not, I, put forth my hand  
To hold the Ark, although it seem to shake  
Through th' old sinnes and new doctrines of our land.  
Onely, since God doth often vessels make  
Of lowly matter for high uses meet,  
I throw me at his feet.

There will I lie, untill my Maker seek  
For some mean stuffe whereon to show his skill:  
Then is my time. The distance of the meek  
Doth flatter power. Lest good come short of ill  
In praising might, the poore do my submission  
What pride by opposition.

God can choose, and has chosen in the past, to make greatness from lowly matter. Thus he can shape even the lowest soul into a vessel worthy of delivering his greatness to others. But the full impact of the poem goes beyond this rather easy realisation. Everyone knows that God can do anything. The fullest impact of the poem lies in the fact that Herbert assumes his worthiness
for being a vessel of Christ by proclaiming his unworthiness. Like the courtier who commends himself to the good graces of the king by knowing his place, and keeping himself in submission, instead of rivaling the king and thus earning his displeasure, Herbert keeps his place and thus indicates to God that he is one who could be a trustworthy emissary of his word. God will recognize Herbert when his time comes and shape his "lowly matter for high uses meet." Through mortification then, man ultimately lifts himself up rather than throws himself down. God, recognizing the sincerity of man's gestures of unworthiness, will finally make him worthy, and man knows this. Ironically, mortification becomes self-interest after all, but self-interest properly directed, for it denies the transciencies of the flesh, and reaches for the realities of the soul.

In his "Prayer Before Sermon," printed in The Country Parson, Herbert shows that the concept of mortification was an explicit part of his life as a priest, for in it he expounds over and over on man's unworthiness; man ever unworthy of appearing before God's face, for he is "filthiness, and shame," and "for an apple ... lost God, and still loses him for no more; for money, for meat, for diet" (p. 288, 11. 9-20). But here, as elsewhere in the pastoral treatise and his poems, Herbert reminds himself that God himself proclaimed, through his love, man's worthiness. He Himself "exalted ... mercy above all
things" and when man "had sinned beyond any help in heaven or earth, then . . . did the Lord of life, unable of himself to die, contrive to do it. He took flesh, he wept, he died—for his enemies he died; even for those that derided him then, and still despise him" (p. 258, ll. 25-30).

PROVIDENCE

In The Temple, Herbert dedicates one rather lengthy poem to a discussion of Providence. Likewise, he deals with the implications of such a concept in one involved chapter of The Country Parson. The bulk of both discussions concerns the marvelous sustaining and governing powers of God. But beyond these powers lies a third power which is by far the most important aspect of Providence for Herbert the poet and parson. In The Country Parson, Herbert defines this power as "spirituall, by which God turnses all outward blessing to inward advantages. So that if a Farmer hath both a faire harvest, and that also well inned . . . ; yet if God gives him not the Grace to use, and utter this well, all his advantages are to his losse.(p. 271, l. 38; p. 272, ll. 1-3). The workings of Providence must be turned to spiritual advantage.

It is in this sense in which Herbert wrote his poetry, and in which he could say in dedicating his poem on Providence:

0 sacred Providence, who from end to end
Strongly and sweetly movest, shall I write,
And not of thee, through whom my fingers bend
To hold my quill? shall they not do thee right?
Of all the creatures both in sea and land
One only to man thou hast made known thy ways;
And put the penne alone into his hand,
And make him Secretary of thy praise . . .

Wherefore, most sacred Spirit, I here present
For me and all my fellows praise to thee;
And just it is that I should pay the rent,
Because the benefit accrues to me

The religious poet could play an intricate part in God's Providence,
for he alone of God's creatures could fulfill the third and highest
power of Providence, that of accruing the spiritual advantages
which can be taken out of "outward blessings." The religious poet
could realize man's chief duty, praise of God. He could act as
"high priest" for the rest of God's creation which could not sing
His praises. In his poems, Herbert carries out the works of
Providence, just as The Country Parson preaches. It is through
God's grace that Herbert's "fingers bend" to hold his quill. As
I have already stated, it is this realization that must always
underlie the religious poet's endeavors. His metaphors, his apt
phrases are all abortive if God does not shine through them. The
gift of "penne alone into his hand" implies a responsibility on the
part of man, the responsibility to use this gift in praise of God.
The responsibility of praise, though, is in itself a gift, because
of the "benefit," the grace given for singing God's praises, which
has "accrued" to the poet. Thus is the glory of God's Providence.

Herbert indeed praises Providence in his poem of the same name,
In no less than thirty-eight stanzas, Herbert catalogues many of the instances of God's planning in this world. This long unwieldy poem mentions tempests, whales, weeds, pigeons, bees, sheep-dung, herbs, metal mines, furs, marble, glass, hawks, spades, clothes, fire, clouds, frogs, sponges, crocodile jaws, and much more to indicate God's Providence. A typical stanza:

Sheep eat grass, and dung the ground for more:  
Trees after bearing drop their leaves for soil:  
Springs vent their streams, and by expense get store:  
Clouds cool by heat, and baths by cooling boil (ll. 69-72).

At first the hugeness, and rambling nature of the poem seem defects. But a consideration of Herbert's topic here indicates that the somewhat loosely-handled bulk of the poem is intentional. A poem such as "Virtue," for example, can be neatly handled in sixteen well-balanced lines, for the subject of the poem itself is

---

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,  
The bridal of the earth and skie:  
The dew shall weep thy fall to night;  
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave  
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:  
Thy root is ever in its grave,  
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet dayes and roses,  
A box where sweets compacted lie;  
My musick shows ye have your closes,  
And all must die.

Onely a sweet and vertuous soul,  
Like season'd timber, never gives;  
But though the whole world turn to coal,  
Then chiefly lives.
To begin with, a study of those examples of Providence Herbert surveys in the poem indicates that most of God's ways in the world are paradoxical, and mysterious; at least to man. Consider in this light the following lines:

Thou art in small things great (1. 41).
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many (1. 43).
Thou hast made poor sand
Check the proud sea (11. 47-48).
The sea, which seems to stop the traveller,
Is by a ship the speedier passage made.
The winds, who think they rule the mariner,
Are ruled by him, and taught to serve his trade (11. 89-92).

Furthermore, Herbert several times mentions in the poem the inability of man to clearly know God's plan. "If we could hear thy skill and art, what music would it be!" (1. 39-40) But as Herbert implies, we can't hear such celestial music, at least not in our present state. In the stanza of the poem which follows Herbert's long cataloguing of Providential instances, Herbert reiterates finally man's incapacity to fully understand Providence:

But who hath praise enough? nay who hath any?
None can express thy works, but he that knows them:
And none can know thy works, which are so many,
And so complete, but only he that owes them (11. 141-144).

Thus Herbert has written a poem which is not short and neat. His inability to handle the subject precisely is true to man's incomplete understanding of Providence itself.

But Herbert sees this inability to handle Providence as in itself an example of God's planning for man. As he says in
The Country Parson, the final end of Providence is to show "God's hand in all things, and to believe, that things are not set in such an inevitable order, but that God often changeth it according as he sees fit, either for reward or punishment" (p. 270, ll. 29-32). He who understands the Providential scheme completely, or at least thinks he does, tends to neglect that which is behind the cosmic happenings, God Himself. He sees the world as a machine, pre-set and also predictable. But God has seen fit to prevent this undesirable situation. He does so first, Herbert says in The Country Parson, through "his sustaining power (which) preserves and actuates everything in his being; so that corn doth not grow by any other vertue, than by that which he continually supplyes as the corn needs it" (p. 271, ll. 3-6). Without God's constant supplying of rain, for instance, the corn would dry up. Nothing, says Herbert, can "presume of an inevitable course" (p. 271, ll. 8-9), for when God pleased, "the sun stood still" (p. 271, l. 11). Further, "if he suite not other things to the growth, as seasons, and weather, and other accidents by his governing power, the fairest harvests come to nothing" (p. 271, ll. 16-18). All this God does not out of spite, but as I have indicated, as part of his planning for man, as part of his Providence. As Herbert continues, "it is observable, that God delights to have men feel, and acknowledge, and reverence his power," for he desires for man "not to break off, but to . continue his
dependence on God" (p. 271, ll. 34-35). As I have already noted regarding Herbert's idea of Providence, nothing harvested is worthwhile in the world unless that harvest helps man to a spiritual advantage. Ian's inability to fully recognize the workings of Providence and thus rest in them, forces him to seek out the God who works the universe.

Perhaps this explanation for the unwieldy bulk of Herbert's "Providence" can be also used to explain the puzzle of the last two stanzas of the poem. Herbert's modern editors, namely George Palmer and F. E. Hutchinson, feel that the stanzas are meant as alternatives to each other. However, in his notes to this poem, Hutchinson concedes that the manuscript gives no indication at all that the stanzas are meant as such, but he sees no better explanation. Indeed, the stanzas are repetitive:

All things that are, though they have sev'rall wayes,
Yet in their being joyn with one advise
To honour thee: and so I give thee praise
In all my other hymnes, but in this twice.

Each thing that is, although in use and name
It go for one, hath many wayes in store
To honour thee; and so each hymne thy fame
Extolleth many wayes, yet this one more (p. 121, ll. 145-152).

Both stanzas express the same idea: Just as every single thing in this world, though it seems to be one thing in being and function, does God's bidding in many ways (as Herbert has evidenced throughout the poem) so the poet praises God here doubly, both for himself, and as the spokesman for all of creation.
Could it be, however, that Herbert intends the repetition, in the same manner in which he intends the ponderous effect detected in his cataloguing of the ways of Providence? Could it be that here too his metrics match the sense of the idea he communicates. He has, in the immediately previous stanza, stated that on one, except God himself, can adequately understand and praise the glory of Providence. Thus, why should he turn face, and easily express that he has done it. Perhaps the last two stanzas are meant to be indecisive, as if Herbert were indicating at the end of the next to the last stanza "No, that's not quite it," and at the end of the last stanza, "No, that's not it either."

Such an interpretation at least matches the notions on Providence expressed by Herbert both in the preceding lines of the poem, and in The Country Parson. As Herbert realized in his "Employment" poems, man cannot hope for perfect acceptance and understanding. He must be willing to live with what he has. Such are the ways of Providence which bring man back to God where he belongs, not allowing him to rest in himself and his world.

Herbert's poem "The Quip" shows one perfectly ready to live with what God provides for him. Let the world offer what it might—beauty, money, glory, wit or conversation—the poet places all his trust in God.

The merrie world did on a day
With his train-bands and mates agree
To meet together, where I lay,
And all in sport to geere at me.
First, Beaitie crept into a rose,
Which when I plucked not, Sir, said she,
Tell me, I pray, whose hands are those?
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then Honey came, and thinking still,
What tune is this, poor man? said he:
I heard in musick you had skill.
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then came brave Gloria puffing by
In silks that whistled, who but he?
He scarce allow'd me half an eye.
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then came quick Wit and Conversation,
And he would needs a comfort be,
And, to be short, make an Oration.
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Yet when the hour of thy designe
To answer these fine things shall come;
Speak not at large; say, I am thine;
And then they have their answer home.

The world can tempt all it wants, but Herbert has learned the lesson well. Those transient pleasures merely hide the force of God which gives them existence in the first place. God in his Providence, can, and will snatch them away, and leave man alone, unless he has attached himself to that third and highest power of Providence, the Spiritual, through which he can reach the permanent pleasure of God's presence.

Man can trust in Providence for it has planned well for him. Herbert shows in "The Banquet," that the Eucharist is a prime example of God's planning for man.

Welcome sweet and sacred cheer,
Welcome dear;
With me, in me, live and dwell:
For thy neatnesse passeth sight,
Thy delight
Passeth tongue to taste or tell.

O what sweetnesse from the bowl
Fills my soul,
Such as is, and makes divine!
Is some starre (fled from the sphere)
Melted there,
As we sugar melt in wine?

Or hath sweetnesse in the bread
Made a head
To subdue the smell of sinne;
Flowers, and gumes, and powders giving
All their living,
Lest the Enemy should winne?

Doubtlesse, neither starre nor flower
Hath the power
Such a sweetnesse to impart:
Onely God, who gives perfumes,
Flesh assumes,
And with it perfumes my heart.

But as Pomanders and wood
Still are good,
Yet being bruised are better scented:
God, to show farre his love
Could improve,
Here, as broken, is presented.

When I had forgot my birth,
And on earth
In delights of earth was drown'd;
God took blond, and needs would be
Spilt with me,
And so found me on the ground.

Having rais'd me to look up,
In a cup
Sweetly he doth meet my taste.
But I still being low and short,
Farre from court,
Wine becomes a wing at last.
For with it alone I flie
    To the skie:
Where I wipe mine eyes, and see
What I seek, for what I sue;
    Him I view,
Who hath done so much for me.

Let the wonder of his pitie
    Be my dittie,
And take up my lines and life;
Hearken under pain of death,
    Hands and breath;
Strive in this, and love the strife.

God has provided the perfect scheme for man's Redemption, and the ritual of the Eucharist echoes it. God's presence therein makes the sweet wine even sweeter, the fine bread even finer. Just as God perfumes the communion bread through his presence within it he has perfumed Herbert's heart through his incarnation. The blood God spilled on the ground, where man was found, fills the cup from which Herbert drinks, a drink which draws him up to that which he seeks, his place in Heaven with God. God has aptly chosen the Eucharist, echoing the whole Redemptive process to lead man back to Him. The blood Christ shed becomes wine; the body he sacrificed, bread; both of which Herbert consumes as food to show his intimate sharing in his redemption with Christ. God, has ordained that a banquet be spread to indicate his forgiveness of man, to show his Providence for what it ultimately is--Love.

LOVE

Perhaps the most important aspect of God's Providence for
Herbert is His ordination of salvation for man through His great love. The fact that Herbert feels his apprehension of this love could alone make for meaningful poetry has already been discussed in the consideration of Herbert's poem entitled "Jordan (II)."

The Country Parson confirms my statement that love, even apart from its powers to provide the source for true religious poetry, was central to Herbert's understanding of his faith:

Blessed Saviour! many waters could not quench thy love! nor no pit overwhelm it. But though the streams of thy blood were current through darkness, grave, and hell, yet by these thy conflicts, and seemingly hazards, didst thou rise triumphant, and therein madst us victorious.

Neither doth thy love yet stay here! for, this word of thy rich peace, and reconciliation, thou hast committed, not to Thunder, or Angels, but to silly and sinfull men: even to me, pardoning my sins, and bidding me go feed the people of thy love" (p. 288, ll. 30-33, p. 289, ll. 1-7).

The magnitude of God's love, love that "made our salvation, not our punishment, thy glory" (p. 288, ll. 23-24), love that kept man in existence, when by desert he should have been destroyed, is the key concept in Herbert's understanding of his own faith. Love also marks the actions of the preacher and poet, for it is obvious that feeling God's love, the poet-parson should work in it and with it, preaching it, and constantly demonstrating it to others for the greater glory of God. As for the parson, then, "Love is his businesse and aime" (p. 284, l. 16). Herbert's "Love (I)" makes it the poet's aim too, as I have already indicated.

In the writings and considerations of other poets the emphasis on physical love is ignorance, and profanes that which maintains
the Universe and man's existence: that is, God's love. Without it, the minds and souls of men, who pervert themselves in their quest for romantic love, would not even exist. The default is one of intelligence as much as of morality; neglect of God's immortal love is stupidity.

"Love (I)" and "Love (II)" are rather pedantic expressions of the concept of love as Herbert brings out in The Country Parson. The tone is too "cut and dried," and the effect is one of Herbert talking about "those other poets" who didn't see the light. He talks about love but is not dramatically involved in it.

"Love (III)," the concluding poem of The Temple involves Herbert wholly and dramatically.

That a complete surrender to God's love was the consummation of faith for Herbert seems borne out by the placing of "Love (III)" as the final poem of The Temple. In this poem Herbert appears to have found that restful goal toward which all of his trials outlined in The Temple have led him--the subjection of his will "to the will of Jesus my Master: in whose service I have now found perfect freedom."21

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guiltie of dust and sinne,
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grew slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lack'd any thing.

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21 Ibid.
A guest, I answer'd worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratfull? Ah my deare,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.
You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat. ("Love (III)"

God's love beckons the soul of man, but man feels unworthy,
"guiltie of dust and sinne." As Herbert says in The Country
Parson, if God hates man, he does it because he is but an unworthy
creature, "dust and ashes" (ll. 9-10, p. 283) not "worthy to
be here." But as he continues in his pastoral treatise,
"as Creatures, (God) must needs love them; for no perfect Artist
ever yet hated his owne worke" (p. 283, 11. 11-12).

However, Herbert points out man might argue that he is not worthy
of God's love because of his sinful nature. To this protestation,
Herbert replies that "As sinfull, he must much more love them;
because not withstanding his infinite hate of sinne, his Love
overcame that hate; and with an exceeding great victory, which in
the Creation needed not, gave them love for love, even the son of
his love out of his bosome of love" (p. 283, 11. 13-17).

"And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?"

As Herbert concludes his discussion of the certainty of God's
love in The Country Parson:

So that man, which way soever he turnes, hath two pledges of God's Love, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; the one in his being, the other in his sinfull being: and this as the more faulty in him, so the more glorious in God. And all may certainly conclude, that God loves them . . . (p. 283, ll. 17-22).

"So I did sit and eat."

* * *

My didactic approach to Herbert's poetry, in which I have compared the pastoral criteria found in The Country Parson to the themes of his poems, does not describe every area of Herbert's greatness in art. One area I have treated only lightly so far has been described by T. S. Eliot:

When I claim a place for Herbert among those poets whose work every lover of English poetry should read and student of English poetry should study, irrespective of religious belief or unbelief, I am not thinking primarily of the exquisite craftsmanship, the extraordinary metrical virtuosity, or the verbal felicities, but of the content of the poems which make up The Temple. These poems form a record of spiritual struggle which should touch the feeling, and enlarge the understanding of those readers also who hold no religious belief and find themselves unmoved by religious
emotion.22

What Eliot sees every reader reacting to is the intense personal involvement Herbert managed to instill into his poems, as in this stanza:

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night. ("The Flower," 11. 36-42)

Yet I would maintain that even here, in this highly personal stanza, my thesis has application. The intense personal involvement with which the reader reacts is the result of a philosophy of poetry which parallels the precepts Herbert put forth in The Country Parson. The concrete image, the metaphor in which Herbert compares himself to a re-budding flower, is just that type of device which Herbert urges the parson to use, "for particulars ever touch, and awake more then generalls."

22 T. S. Eliot, "George Herbert," in British Writers and Their Works, Vol. 4, ed. by Bonamy Dobree (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 67. L. C. Knights in "George Herbert," Explorations (New York: George W. Stewart, Inc., 1947), p. 134, is most likely referring to what Eliot called "verbal felicities" when he states that it is Herbert's "feeling for all the resources of 'our language' that gives to the greater poems of spiritual conflict their disturbing immediacy." Eliot recognizes primarily the "content" of Herbert's poetry as accounting for this "disturbing immediacy" Knights focuses on Herbert's language. As will be shown, both approaches can be elaborated upon through reference to The Country Parson.
Sometimes the parson tells his congregation stories . . ., for them also men heed, and remember better then exhortations" (p. 233, ll. 11-13). The soul upon which "tempests fell all night" and now smells "the dew and the rain" is just one image drawn from the mind of a man who stated that "there is no knowledge, but, in a skillful hand, serves either positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge" (p. 228, ll. 15-17), and who believed that all Nature could teach of God's grace, "even as our Saviour made plants and seeds to teach the people" (p. 261, ll. 13-14).

The genuine feeling, the reader's impression that Herbert really experiences what he dramatizes in his poems, can be partially explained by further reference to The Country Parson. The reader feels the human presence in Herbert's poetry because he unabashedly makes the events and feelings of his own life the core of each of his poems, just as the parson must make his own life the touchstone for the trials of faith of his parishioners. Throughout his pastoral treatise Herbert reiterates his belief that the parson's life itself can and must be used as an example for all to follow. He must serve in "Christ's stead," and live as Christ did in the absence of Christ on earth. For example, the parson's library, as described by Herbert, is not a repository of scholastic teachings and contemplative writings, but is actually "a holy life." This "holy life" is the true
well-spring of the spiritual wisdom with which the parson can
improve the souls of the faithful. As Herbert continues:

For the temptations with which a good man is beset, and the
ways which he used to overcome them, being told to another,
whether in private conference, or in the Church, are a Sermon.
Hoe that hath considered how to carry himself at table about
his appetite, if he tell this to another, preacheth; and much
more feelingly, and judiciously, then he who writes his rules
of temperance out of bookes. So that the Parson having studied,
and mastered all the lusts and affections within, and the
whole Army of Temptations without, hath ever so many sermons
ready penn'd as he hath victories. And it fares in this as
it doth in Physick: He that hath been sick of a Consumption,
and knows what recovered him, is a Physician so far as he
meets with the same disease, and temper; and can much
better, and particularly do it, then he that is generally
learned, and was never sick . . . . Just so it is in
Divinity, and that not without manifest reason: for though
the temptations may be diverse in divers Christians, yet
the victory is alike in all, being by the self-same
Spirit . . . . This instruction and comfort the Parson
getting for himself, when he tells it to others, becomes a
Sermon. The like he doth in other Christian virtues, as of
Faith, and Love, and the Cases of Conscience belonging
thereto, wherein (as Saint Paul implies that he ought,
Romans 2,) he first preacheth to himselfe, and then to
others (p. 278, ll. 11-33).

Herbert can write so movingly on the spiritual afflictions
and eventual bliss of one who has fully realized his faith
because he himself has experienced the feelings acutely. As Eliot
recognizes, the drama of Herbert's poems is a personal one.

Herbert uncovers the most intimate corners of his soul.
This uncovering fulfills the twofold purpose of the parson's life;
the praise of God; and the edification of his fellow man. What
more praise can be given to God than the depiction of the sal-
vation of a soul made possible only through God's great love?
And what is more worthy of edification than the life of a holy
man?

Didactic poetry has been held in low esteem by critics during the last several decades. Yet I think a reader should not ignore Herbert's desire to be morally instructive in his poems. To do so would be to deny the importance of Herbert's prose, which forms a body of print nearly as long as his verse. Herbert is a teacher in his poems, and an excellent teacher. No sleep-inducing platitudes or dry lectures choke his lessons. His instructions are in the form of a human life, vivid, alive, and above all, interesting. The poems of The Temple are dramatic and personal renditions of those same situations treated prosaically in The Country Parson. Herbert could have catechised all day: "When is man most free?" "When he submits his will to the will of God." And at night he could have written lines like these:

But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
at every word,
Me thoughts I heard one calling, 'Child!'
And I replied, 'My Lord!' ("The Collar," ll. 33-36).

What I have shown here is simply that the same man wrote both.
WORKS CITED


