THE DOMINANT POETIC THEME OF GEORGE HERBERT'S THE TEMPLE: UNION WITH GOD

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PREFACE

The religious poems of George Herbert's The Temple have long been admired for their lyrical beauty and their devotional quality. However, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the literary aspects of The Temple, especially with regard to the meaning and significance of its three-part structure and Herbert's use of symbolism and imagery. Studies of this nature have clearly demonstrated that the work is not simply a random collection of personal, devotional poems. Instead, its three divisions, "Church-porch," "The Church," and "The Church Militant," form a unified, coherent whole. Thus, the literary merit as well as the devotional value of The Temple is being recognized and appreciated.

Although recent studies have provided valuable insights into the structure and symbolism of The Temple, its poetic meaning has not been fully revealed. Therefore, this study has been undertaken for the purpose of gaining deeper insights into the meaning of the collection. Hence, this examination of the dominant poetic theme, union with God, has been made, indicating that not only does The Temple exhibit a structural unity, but also possesses a thematic unity. The "union with

God" theme has been examined in the background of seventeenth-century literary conventions. Herbert's personal and religious life and the Protestant theological views of the day have also been considered in connection with his development of the theme. Because symbolism and imagery are extremely important to Herbert's theme, these literary features have not been overlooked. The didactic poem, "Church-porch" (the first division), has been discussed in the light of its analogous relationship to the courtyard of the Hebrew temple, indicating the literary purpose of the poem. In the large, central division, "The Church," many of Herbert's highly personal poems have been examined and their meaning, in relationship to the theme, explained. Finally, to show the relationship between "The Church Militant" (the final division) and the other two divisions of The Temple, Herbert's development of the theme is traced and its significance observed in this long, narrative poem.

I wish to express gratitude to Dr. Charles E. Walton for stimulating my interest in a study of George Herbert's religious poetry and for his scholarly advice and guidance in the preparation of this research study. His kindness and encouragement throughout the course of my graduate studies are also appreciated. I wish to express sincere

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE DOMINANT POETIC THEME OF THE TEMPLE: UNION WITH GOD

A collection of George Herbert's works entitled The Temple, Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations was first published in 1633, shortly after the poet's death.[1] Walton, in his biography of Herbert, writes that, before Herbert's death, the poet requested a servant to deliver the manuscript of The Temple to his friend, Nicholas Ferrar, with the following message:

> . . . desire him [Ferrar] to read it: and then, 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 . . . .[2]

Apparently, Ferrar, an Anglican clergyman, recognized the devotional value of the collection and promptly arranged for its printing. According to Summers, the small volume was well received by the public.[3] Thus, one may assume that the seventeenth-century readers' appreciation of Herbert's deeply

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[1]Margaret Bottrall, George Herbert, p. 50.

[2]Izaak Walton, The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson, p. 314.

[3]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert: His Religion and Art, p. 113.

religious poems and their ability to identify themselves with the poet probably are responsible, at least to some extent, for the popularity of The Temple. Of course, these readers must have understood the symbolism that Herbert used and the religious tradition in which he wrote. However, the lyrical beauty of the poems in "The Church" cannot be overlooked as a contributing factor to its popularity.

Many modern scholars have noted the devotional quality of The Temple but have concerned themselves with the literary merits of the work. For example, Scott believes that Herbert's poems are among the finest in the English language.[4] However, although the twentieth-century reader and scholar can appreciate the beauty and the literary merits of Herbert's poems, the modern reader usually encounters some difficulty in comprehending the full meaning conveyed by the types and symbols that Herbert uses. In fact, Colie asserts that Herbert's poems are more difficult to understand than those of most other English poets.[5] Furthermore, he contends that the scholars' efforts to explain the meaning of his poems

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[4]Walter Sidney Scott (ed.), The Fantasticks: Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, p. 59.

[5]R. L. Colie, "Logos in The Temple: George Herbert and the Shape of Content," Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institute, XXVI (1963), 327.

have not been altogether successful.[6] Therefore, the possibility of gaining new insights into the meaning of The Temple provides impetus for continued scholarly investigation. In this connection, Drake observes that, in recent years, scholars have investigated such aspects of The Temple as its structure and the order of the poems within the work.[7] Such studies have contributed significantly to an increased understanding of the unified structure of The Temple. Also, studies of this nature have generally confirmed the opinion that Herbert, even though he probably did not originally write his poems for publication, followed an orderly plan in the placement of his poems in the collection. In other words, The Temple is not simply a random compilation of devotional lyrics.

Studies of the titular metaphor, the temple, and its significance in connection with the three-part structure of The Temple have indicated that the work is a unified whole. For instance, Hanley observes that the title of the volume

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[6]Loc. cit.

[7]Ben E. Drake, "The Patterning of George Herbert's The Temple (1633): Critics and Manuscripts," DA, XXVII (1967), 4246A.

is an important unifying factor.[8] However, another aspect of The Temple that contributes to the unity of the work is its dominant theme, the union with God. The striving toward a perfect spiritual relationship with God that pervades The Temple may be defined as the longing of the human soul for the kind of intimate communion that existed between Adam and God in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the Garden through Adam's disobedience. Sin separates the soul from God's presence, but the soul seems to have an overwhelming desire to be reunited with God. An understanding of Herbert's development of this theme throughout the three-part structure of The Temple enhances one's appreciation for the literary excellence of his work, clearly demonstrating the logical relationship between the three sections, "Church-porch," "The Church," and "The Church Militant." An understanding of this theme also provides many interesting insights into the meaning of the work as a whole.

The theme is not as explicitly developed in "Church-porch" as it is in the highly personal, devotional poems of the central section, "The Church." However, an examination

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[8]Sara William Hanley, "Temples in The Temple: Herbert's Study of the Church," SEL, VIII (1968), 121.

of the stanzas of this didactic poem will provide many indications that the young man addressed by the speaker is being prepared to attain eventually a union with God.

In "The Church," the young man, through the church sacraments, rituals, and prayers, and through personal faith in Christ, actively begins to aspire to an awareness of God's presence. The theme, in its several stages, is quite obvious in many of the poems in "The Church" section. For example, Boyd divides the progression of the soul in "The Church" section into three phases: entry, conflict, and resolution.[9] The uneven progress and imperfect, momentary spiritual consciousness that the soul experiences in "The Church" section look forward to a perfect union with God in the New Jerusalem.[10] This ideal relationship between the soul and God is not attained, of course, until the end of "The Church" section of the work.

The theme pervades "The Church Militant," but, as in "Church-porch," its development is not as easily recognized as it is in "The Church." In "The Church Militant," instead

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[9]George W. Boyd, "George Herbert: A Revaluation," DA XVII (1957), 1747.

[10]John David Walker, "The Architectonics of George Herbert's The Temple," ELH, XXIX (1962), 291.

of depicting the individual soul's struggle to attain spiritual communion with the Divine, the poet turns his attention to the church as a body. Hence, in this section, he describes the church's preparation and her struggles throughout history as she progresses toward a reunion with God at the Judgment. Parallels can be drawn between the constant conflicts and triumphs of the soul as it progresses toward heaven and the struggles and triumphs of the church as she moves toward the Judgment.

Since other seventeenth-century writers, including John Donne, express the longing of the soul for reconciliation with God, Herbert's works may be considered in the context of his poetic heritage. Traditionally, Herbert has been identified along with Donne and others as a metaphysical poet, and it is not surprising to discover that his poetry exhibits some of the same characteristics as the poetry of other writers of his age. For instance, one of the features of metaphysical poetry is a pervading sense of alienation from God and a consuming desire to attain a vital, personal relationship with the Divine. Scott makes an important observation about the poetic vision of Herbert and his contemporaries:

> They were seekers; they were wise; they were appreciative; they were gifted with divine energy; they sought--and at the last they found.[11]

Some of the metaphysical poets were influenced by the Christian mystics of earlier centuries who attempted to establish an intimate spiritual relationship with God through prayer and meditation. Herbert is deeply concerned about his personal relationship to God, but he can hardly be classified as a religious mystic in the usual sense of one who separates himself from society and devotes himself completely to contemplation. Although Herbert places much emphasis upon the inner life, he believes that only at death does the soul acquire a full realization of God's presence.[12] At any rate, Herbert seems to have been influenced to some extent by Donne and other poets of the time.

The sense of alienation from God that is evident in seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry can be attributed, at least in part, to the unsettled religious, social, and political conditions of the time. The chaos of the world fostered a kind of melancholy that prompted men to search

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[11]Scott, op. cit., p. 9.

[12]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 69.

for peace with God.[13] Of course, individuals responded differently to the unsettled state of affairs and expressed varying degrees of anxiety and tension in their poetry. Unlike Donne, Herbert quite consistently expresses a firm faith in a benevolent God, but in "The Church," he also expresses feelings of anxiety and discouragement when he is unable to maintain a constant communion with his God. Bottrall, however, sees in Herbert's basically positive outlook a distinct departure from the metaphysical tradition.[14] She attributes this quality of his poetry to his understanding of the relationship between the material world and the spiritual world;[15] thus, his faith in God was never actually shaken as Donne's faith was.

Another feature of the metaphysicals that must be noted in connection with Herbert's development of the theme is the use of symbols and images with more than one level of meaning. Smith contends that the metaphysical poets use symbols and images not to enhance the beauty of their verse, but that they fuse image and thought to amplify their

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[13]Marchette Chute, Two Gentle Men, p. 108.

[14]Bottrall, op. cit., p. 136.

[15]Loc. cit.

meanings.[16] Herbert skillfully uses symbols for this purpose in many of his poems, such as "The Collar" and "The Temper." In each poem, the symbolic title expresses an important truth concerning the relationship of the soul to God. Further, Boyd notes that the temple symbol and the multi-level meanings associated with it are inseparable.[17] Of course, the temple symbol itself is closely associated with the idea of a union with God. This image, Carnes notes, is an allusion to the linking of every aspect of the liturgy of the church with its inherent meaning.[18] To Herbert, ritual is one means whereby the soul transcends the material world to commune with the divine Spirit in the spiritual realm. Therefore, in his use of symbols and images, Herbert belongs to the metaphysical tradition.

Metaphysical poetry is characterized by its highly personal nature.[19] This quality is particularly prominent

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[16]W. Bradford Smith, "What Is Metaphysical Poetry?" Sewanee Review, XLII (1934), 263.

[17]Boyd, op. cit., p. 1747.

[18]Valerie Carnes, "The Unity of George Herbert's The Temple: A Reconsideration," ELH, XXXV (1968), 506-507.

[19]Edwin Honig and Oscar Williams (eds.), The Major Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth Century, p. 6.

in "The Church" section of The Temple. Concerning the personal nature of Herbert's poetry, Bennett states, "With the exception of a few didactic poems interpreting the doctrine or ritual of the Church, all his poetry is spiritual autobiography."[20] Perhaps, no other poetic convention could have provided a better means for Herbert's expression of his relationship with God.

According to Martz, the lyric quality, as well as the religious subject matter of Herbert's poems, links him with the religious meditative tradition, a term he prefers to "metaphysical." Martz contends that these poets of meditation constantly endeavored to experience a sense of God's presence by performing certain devotional exercises.[21] Therefore, Ostriker believes that it is significant that, in nearly half of Herbert's poems, the speaker addresses God.[22] Also, the careful preparation for entry into the church that Herbert describes in "Church-porch" may echo the poetry of meditation. Thus, Herbert's poetry has some

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[20]Joan Bennett, Four Metaphysical Poets, p. 56.

[21]Louis L. Martz (ed.), The Meditative Poem: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Verse, p. xviii.

[22]Alicia Ostriker, "Song and Speech in the Metrics of George Herbert," PMLA, LXXX (1965), 65.

affinities with the meditative tradition. Herbert, along with other devout churchmen of his age, believed that God's presence pervades the universe, even though human beings may be unaware of it. Therefore, every person's primary obligation is to strive to become conscious of this Divine presence.[23] This basic attitude toward God is prominently seen in "The Church," for the poet is ever striving to maintain a sense of God's presence in his heart.

Concerning Herbert's dominant theme, one must not overlook the influence of the emblem tradition. Although most scholars do not consider him an emblem poet, there are specific emblematic features in his work. Traditionally, the purpose of an emblem is to stimulate the mind to comprehend spiritual truths and, thus, strengthen the individual's relationship with the Divine. The visual features of Herbert's poems play, at least, some part in his attempts to express the idea of maintaining an intimate relationship with God. Bush notes that Herbert often converts a conventional emblem into a poem distinctly his own.[24] The poem,

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[23]Louis L. Martz (ed.), The Meditative Poem, p. xviii.

[24]Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660, p. 145.

"The Church Floor," is cited by Freeman as presenting a visual image, thus having its ideas rooted in the English emblem books.[25] Because Herbert's images are visual, his poetry may be considered to resemble emblem poetry.[26] Miner agrees with Freeman's evaluation and contends that Herbert is more closely related to the emblem poets than the other writers of the metaphysical school.[27] Freeman also believes that the emblem convention is responsible in part for the high quality of Herbert's verse.[28] Thus, Herbert owes a debt to the emblem mode for his vivid, concrete imagery.

An understanding of the poetic context in which Herbert wrote is, of course, important, but since one can hardly separate the life of a religious poet from his work, some aspects of Herbert's life deserve attention. His attitudes and beliefs have a great influence on his choice of a pervading theme. It may be important to note that, at the age seventeen, when Herbert was a student at Cambridge, he

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[25]Rosemary Freeman, "George Herbert and the Emblem Books," RES, XVII (1941), 155.

[26]Ibid., p. 156.

[27]Earl R. Miner, The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley, p. 232.

[28]Freeman, op. cit., p. 165.

expressed, in a letter to his mother, a desire to dedicate his poetic abilities to the service of God:

> For my part, my meaning (dear Mother) is in these Sonnets, to declare my resolution to be, that my poor abilities in Poetry shall be all and ever consecrated to God's glory . . . .[29]

Apparently, even at this early age, his inclinations were toward pleasing God. Thus, one may conclude that he desires to establish a close relationship with God. In The Temple, one becomes aware that, through his frequent references to church ritual and the importance of an ordered Christian life, the poet is endeavoring to honor God. Moreover, the subject of his poems is highly personal. Herbert is extremely concerned about his spiritual status.[30] Therefore, his religious life demanded the same diligence and orderliness that every other area of his life required.

This attitude may have been derived from his early home life. According to Walton, the Herbert family was religious and respected, and in childhood the boy was carefully nurtured by his devout, capable mother and a tutor.[31] His

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[29]Walton, op. cit., p. 268.

[30]Chute, op. cit., p. 112.

[31]Walton, op. cit., p. 262.

childhood home was characterized by dignity and order.[32] In his years as a student at Cambridge, the routine established in his home was replaced by an equally rigid daily schedule of prayers, devotional exercises, and study.[33] This disciplined routine became an integral part of his adult life. Some scholars point to his choice of secular pursuits, including a period of government service, as evidence of a lapse in his devotion to God. However, Chute contends that even though he did not take religious orders immediately after his Cambridge years, his dedication to the service of God remained intact.[34] His constant desire, whether engaged in government service or involved in ministering to his parishioners at Bemerton in the last years of his life, was to maintain an intimate relationship with his God.[35]

After taking religious orders, Herbert expressed, in his prose treatise, The Country Parson, his mature thoughts concerning orderliness and its importance to one's spiritual life and its relationship to public worship. Here, he

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[32]Chute, op. cit., p. 26.

[33]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[34]Ibid., p. 77.

[35]Bottrall, op. cit., p. 134.

refers to St. Paul's words, "Let all things be done decently and in order,"[36] to express his own views. Thus, to Herbert, the life that pleases God and leads to union with the Divine Spirit is orderly and devout.[37]

Herbert's theological position also has a definite bearing upon his development of the dominant theme in The Temple. First, it should be noted that Herbert's views are largely derived from the Bible, and his poems are filled with paraphrased Biblical passages and allusions to events recorded in the Scriptures. However, an understanding of the religious thought of the day, because it influenced Herbert's views, is helpful. Christianity still had a firm grasp upon English society in Herbert's time, in spite of the new science and rational philosophy.[38] Furthermore, the Bible was still accepted as the guide for faith and practice by most Protestants. As Summer notes, the poem, "Discipline," expresses this idea.[39] In the seventeenth-century, the

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[36]I Corinthians xiv.40.

[37]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 64.

[38]Ibid., p. 185.

[39]Joseph H. Summers, "Herbert's Form," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 1060.

Puritans were making their influence felt, particularly in their opposition to church ritual. Hughes points out that Herbert, although he was in agreement with the doctrines of the Puritans, was a moderate churchman who supported the Anglican Church and advocated the traditional rituals and the use of music and vestments in the public worship services.[40] However, for Herbert, the Anglican ritual and the prescribed prayers were much more than a form. They were a means of spiritual renewal and edification for the individual worshipper.[41]

Concerning Herbert's theological position, Chute observes that he was Calvinistic.[42] His poetry unmistakably shows that he possessed a firm belief in God's foreknowledge and his vital role in human history. These views are in agreement with Calvinism. Consequently, the poet can, in "The Church Militant," portray the victories and defeats of the church with the conviction that every event conforms to God's eternal plan. The presence of sin in the world,

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[40]Johnson D. Hughes, "George Herbert: His Place in English Church History," DA, XXI (1960), 975.

[41]Helen White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 177.

[42]Chute, op. cit., p. 119.

therefore, does not unduly alarm Herbert, for he views the events of history as predestined by a benevolent God whose righteousness will eventually triumph over evil.

Another aspect of Herbert's theology that has a definite influence on his development of the dominant theme of The Temple is the medieval typological method of interpreting the Bible which is evident throughout the work. Galdon states that, according to this method of Biblical interpretation, which has precedence in the New Testament and the writings of Aquinas,

> . . . persons and events of the Old Testament are viewed as historical and phenomenal realities which are also . . . prophetic signs and foreshadowings of persons and events in God's redemptive plan and control of history as it is fulfilled and revealed in the New Testament.[43]

The Hebrew religion of the Old Testament with its Law and its sacrificial system centered in the temple at Jerusalem is analogous to Christ and his sacrificial death in the New Testament. Christ was considered to be the fulfillment of the Law, and the concept of a God of wrath was superseded by the idea of a merciful, loving Christ. Since Herbert

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[43]Joseph A. Galdon, "Typology and Seventeenth-century Literature," DA, XXVI (1965), 7296.

upheld this method of Biblical interpretation, it is not surprising, then, that his poetry is replete with parallels between the Old Testament and the New. In this respect, Herbert is a typical seventeenth-century writer, since this method of explaining the meaning of the Scriptures was a basic premise underlying seventeenth-century literature.[44] The reader of The Temple becomes especially conscious of the parallels Herbert repeatedly draws between the tablets of stone upon which Moses' Law, the Ten Commandments, were engraved and the human heart upon which Christ desires to "write" his new law of love.[45] In addition to the precedent established by the Biblical writers and the church fathers for this type of Biblical interpretation, Herbert and his contemporaries also had the example of the Reformation theologians. Gilbert notes that Melanchton, a churchman closely associated with Luther, employed Old Testament symbols to explain New Testament truths.[46]

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[44]Loc. cit.

[45]Wilbur Sanders, "Herbert and the Scholars," Melbourne Critical Review, IV (1961), 105.

[46]George Holley Gilbert, Interpretation of the Bible: A Short History, p. 205.

Of special significance with regard to Herbert's The Temple is that the typological method of interpretation figures prominently in his use of a central metaphor, the temple. Carnes observes that the three divisions of the literal temple illustrate the idea of the fall of man, his redemption, and his reconciliation to God.[47] Thus, Herbert uses the first two divisions of the literal Hebrew temple as a symbolic representation of the soul's preparation and progress through life toward reconciliation with God in heaven. Then, he uses the third division of the temple to show the final state of the soul after attaining perfect union with God in heaven. The soul, from its vantage point in heaven, traces the progress of the collective body of Christians called the church through history to the point where she is also united with God.

Herbert ascribes at least three levels of meaning to the temple. The temple may refer, of course, to the Hebrew temple, but it may also refer to the church, the body of Christ, as well as to the individual Christian soul. Bush observes that Herbert's use of the temple metaphor is harmonious with his personal convictions and also corresponds

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[47]Carnes, op. cit., p. 524.

to the literary conventions of his day.[48] Furthermore, Endicott observes that, traditionally, the three divisions of the literal Hebrew temple are analogous to the basic steps in the Christian's spiritual progress. The purification ritual, performed in the porch of the temple, is an analogy of the soul's cleansing from sin. The holy place is an analogy of the Christian's devotional exercises as a member of the church. Then, the holy of holies represents the eternal state of the soul in heaven.[49] In this connection, it is important to be aware that, although most of the poems in "The Church" section deal primarily with the individual soul and its relationship to God, often the speaker is actually a representative of all men. One must understand that Herbert sometimes superimposes one meaning of the temple upon another so that when he uses the term "church," he may mean the body of Christ or the individual Christian who is a miniature church.[50] Consequently, to

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[48]Bush, op. cit., p. 145.

[49]Annabel M. Endicott, "The Structure of George Herbert's Temple: A Reconsideration," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIV (1965), 227.

[50]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-century Poetry, p. 19.

consider the holy of holies as an analogy of heaven may be misleading because "The Church Militant" deals primarily with the struggles and triumphs of the church on earth. However, if one considers Herbert's view of history, it is easily recognized that the perspective of this poem is not earthly. The speaker is in heaven where he has attained perfect union with God. Thus, in retrospect, he sees a panorama of the church's colorful history. The outcome of the events related is predetermined in heaven by an omniscient, omnipotent God who directs every action of the church. However, although an outline of church history is the subject of "The Church Militant," Herbert's real interest is not in history nor is he interested in the literal temple. His great concern is the condition of the soul.[51] Therefore, to please God and to experience union with him is, according to Herbert's attitude, the primary purpose of human life.

In the foregoing discussion, it has become apparent that, in his development of the theme of The Temple, union with God, Herbert was influenced by a complex poetic tradition. In particular, his poems show the metaphysical

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[51]Joseph H. Summers, "Herbert's Form," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 1066.

characteristic of a strong desire for a communion with God, although he uniquely adapts the theme to his own purposes. The emblem convention also made a definite contribution to Herbert's poetic skills, especially with regard to his use of concrete imagery. Herbert's familiarity with the poetry of meditation, including the religious mystical writings, must have played a part in his development of the theme, since this group of writers had the same concern for personal religion that Herbert had.

Herbert's personal life and particularly his devout religious practices influenced the form and content of The Temple. His devotion to the Anglican Church and his support of its rituals, as well as his personal faith in God, is abundantly evident in the poems of The Temple. The poet possessed a thorough knowledge of the Bible and adhered to the traditional interpretation of its text centered around Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and the central figure in the reconciliation of man to God. Furthermore, he was firmly convinced that the Bible is the guide to a well-ordered daily life that is in harmony with God's will. As a typical seventeenth-century Protestant, he accepted the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and its view of human history based on the foreknowledge of God.

All of these factors, poetic tradition, personal life, and theological views, played an important role in Herbert's development of the dominant poetic theme, union with God.

CHAPTER II

"CHURCH-PORCH": THE SOUL'S PREPARATION FOR UNION WITH GOD

It is generally agreed that the opening section of The Temple ("Church-porch") was written before the poems included in the group entitled "The Church." However, scholars who have studied the available manuscripts of The Temple have concluded that this poem is a suitable introduction to the entire collection. They have also discovered evidence to show that Herbert diligently continued to revise and improve his poems, including "Church-porch," throughout his lifetime.[52] For example, Chute describes "Church-porch" as a clever examination of proper Christian conduct.[53] It is addressed to a young man and contains practical advice about morals and manners, providing him with instructions for entry into the Christian life as a member of the church. Summers contends that this young man is probably an aristocrat like Herbert.[54]

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[52]Bottrall, op. cit., p. 59.

[53]Chute, op. cit., p. 148.

[54]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 104.

To understand the full meaning of "Church-porch," one must apply the principles of the typological interpretation of the Bible, particularly with regard to the relation between the Old Testament temple and the New Testament church. In accordance with the typological method, then, the "Church-porch" is analogous to the first division of the Hebrew temple called the porch or courtyard. Accordingly, in its purpose, the church-porch of the Christian church is likened to the courtyard which was a place of ritual purification in Old Testament times. According to the Exodus account, the high priest and the lesser priests were to be brought into the courtyard to the door of the holy place where they were cleansed with water, clothed in special garments, and anointed for their special office.[55] Walker observes that " . . . the washing with water symbolized a cleansing from sin and the donning of holy garments represented the adorning with virtues."[56] In this connection, Protestants generally believe in what is known as the "priesthood of believers."[57] It becomes apparent that Herbert supports

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[55]Exodus xxix.4-9; 20-22.

[56]Walker, op. cit., p. 291.

[57]Charles H. George and Katherine George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, p. 321.

the view that every Christian, in a sense, is a priest and can approach God through prayer and worship. The Scriptural basis for this idea is embodied in St. Peter's first epistle. He writes: "Ye [Christians] also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[58] Instead of offering animal sacrifices as the Old Testament priests did, the Christian is called upon to present himself to God as a living sacrifice.[59] However, this sacrifice must be pure and acceptable to God just as the Old Testament animal sacrifices were to be without blemish. Thus, Herbert conceives of the "Church-porch" as a place of preparation where sins are purged and virtues are acquired to make the soul acceptable to God. Accordingly, Walker describes this section as a place of transition between the material realm and the spiritual realm.[60] Therefore, he contends that Christian conversion is implied in this section of The Temple.[61] However, conversion, a spiritual experience, must

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[58] I Peter ii.5.

[59] Romans xii.1.

[60] Walker, op. cit., p. 29.

[61] Loc. cit.

be preceded by an orderly, almost ritualistic series of external acts whereby the youth's conduct is refined. The youth must, before his entry into the church proper, adopt orderly, prudent habits of daily living. For instance, the speaker of the poem urges his young friend to learn how to live in harmony with other people. He states, "Catch not at quarrels. He that does not speak / Plainly and home, is coward of the two" (217-218).[62] In the style of the Biblical writer of the book of Proverbs, the speaker, presumably an older, wiser man than the "sweet youth," warns the young man against laziness:

> Flie idlenesse, which yet thou canst not flie
> By dressing, mistressing, and complement.
> . . . . . .
> God gave thy soul brave wings; put not those feathers
> Into a bed, to sleep out all ill weather.
> (79-80; 83-84)

This practical advice is aimed at helping the youth prepare himself to enter God's presence with a well-ordered life.

It has already been noted that the main purpose of "Church-porch" is to prepare the youth for an eventual union with God by purging him of sin and encouraging him to acquire

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[62]F. E. Hutchinson (ed.), The Works of George Herbert, p. 15. All subsequent references to Herbert's works are to this edition and will be identified in the text of the paper.

appropriate virtues, the traditional Christian virtues being those of fortitude, temperance, justice, faith, hope, and charity.[63] In this regard, Summers observes that, in systematic fashion, Herbert utilizes the concept of the traditional deadly sins and the corresponding Christian virtues.[64] For instance, following the introductory stanzas, Herbert in the first of three stanzas launches his warning to the youth against becoming involved in the sin of lust (7-18). Then, he proceeds to treat the sin of gluttony by admonishing his young friend:

> Drink not the third glasse, which thou canst not tame.
> . . . . . .
> When once it is within thee; but before
> Mayst rule it, as thou list; and poure the shame,
> Which it would poure on thee, upon the floore.
> (25; 27-29)

It is probably significant that Herbert begins the poem with this consideration of lust and gluttony. Summers believes that the poet chose to begin with lust and proceed to gluttony because these are only minor offenses in comparison with the other sins.[65] Next, Herbert turns his attention

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[63]Joseph H. Summers, The Heirs of Donne and Jonson, pp. 90-91.

[64]Ibid., p. 90.

[65]Loc. cit.

from sins of the flesh to sins such as swearing, foolish speaking, and lying, the more serious offenses. Whereas his warnings against lust and gluttony were negative, Herbert sometimes uses the positive approach as he does with regard to the subject of proper conversation. For example, he states:

> When thou dost tell anothers jest, therein
> Omit the oathes, which true wit cannot need:
> Pick out of tales the mirth, but not the sinne.
> (61-63)

The mild, inoffensive manner of the speaker lends support to the overall purpose of the "Church-porch," e. g., to lead the youth into a refined life. Structurally, these stanzas are Herbert's logical link between the sins of the flesh and the social sins of sloth, the next deadly sin to be considered.

The practical nature of the speaker's advice in the next series of stanzas is especially evident in the stanzas concerning the sin of sloth. One particular statement illustrates this point: "Art thou a magistrate? then be severe: / If studious, copie fair, what time hath blurr'd" (85-86). One might question whether the mundane nature of

the speaker's advice in these early stanzas is consistent with the idea of spiritual preparation for entry into God's presence. However, if Herbert's personal concept of the well-ordered life in relation to the spiritual life is taken into account, these stanzas are not inconsistent in any way, because he did not believe that piety is confined to matters of faith.

In what may seem to be a digression, Herbert treats the main cause of sloth. In particular, he focuses attention on the neglect of proper training and education for young men in England: "This loss [of industry or ambition] springs cheifly from our education. / Some [fathers] till their ground, but let weeds choke their sonne" (97-98). After two stanzas of negative criticism of the educational system, the poet describes the remedy for the problem by clearly stating: "The way to make thy sonne rich is to fill / His minde with rest, before his trunk with riches" (109-110). In other words, the cultivation of the inner qualities of the mind and heart brings contentment, and the contented person is not easily lead astray into sin for " . . . constancie knits the bones, and makes us stowre / When wanton pleasures becken us to thrall" (117-118).

Summers observes that these stanzas dealing with the proper training of the young man lead effectively into a discussion of learning proper conduct. Then, Herbert cautiously proceeds to a consideration of avarice, an extremely dangerous vice.[66] Thus, in these transitional stanzas, the speaker gives his attention to such matters as moderation and prudence. He encourages the young man to establish a well-ordered daily life. For instance, the speaker notes: "Man is a shop of rules, a well truss'd pack, / Whose every parcell underwrites a law" (141-142). Knowing one's own heart, according to the speaker, is also an important step in preparation for membership in the church. Therefore, he advises the youth to cultivate a habit of reflection and contemplation: "By all means use sometimes to be alone / Salute thy self: see what thy soul doth wear" (145-146). The tone, here, is positive, not negative; the purpose, of course, being to lead the youth gently in a methodical way on the upward path toward God. However, this path is not without its obstacles, the sin of avarice being the most dangerous vice yet encountered by the youth in "Church-porch." Bloomfield, in his discussion of the development of the

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[66] Loc. cit.

traditional concept of the Seven Deadly Sins, comments that in the medieval period the conflict between good and evil was a favorite literary theme.[67] Herbert was probably aware of this convention and adapted it to his own purposes. He sometimes treats vices and virtues in combination or by alternately discussing a vice and then a virtue as a remedy for the particular vice being considered. However, his stanzas concerning avarice generally have a negative tone. They are severe warnings against becoming entangled in the love of money. For example, the speaker warns:

> Wealth is the conjurers devil;
> Whom when he thinks he hath, the devil hath him,
> Gold thou mayst safely touch; but if it stick
> Unto thy hands, it woundeth to the quick.
> (165-168)

But a positive note is sounded in these lines that follow the foregoing warning:

> Raise thy head;
> Take starres for money: starres not to be told
> By any art, yet to be purchased.
> (170-172)

The remedy for the sin of avarice is clearly delineated in these lines. Instead of being greedy and amassing earthly

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[67]Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins, p. 62.

treasures, one should acquire heavenly treasures. Herbert's reliance upon the Biblical text is suggested in this passage, which echoes Jesus' teaching as recorded by St. Luke in his gospel:

> Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourself bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.[68]

The young man preparing for entry into the church is urged to begin early in life to think about eternity. Even before he enters the church, he is instructed to purge himself of avarice and become concerned with heavenly verities. According to traditional Christian classifications of sins, anger and envy are serious offenses. Therefore, after several stanzas concerned with avarice, the speaker turns his attention to envy, relating it, in a practical manner, to living peaceably with others. He discusses everyday affairs (such as using discretion in one's conversation and conduct) before treating specifically the vice of envy. However, when he does speak about envy, his remarks are quite pointed: "Envy not greatnesse: for thou mak'st thereby / Thy self the worse, and so the distance greater" (259-260).

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[68]Luke xii.33.

The speaker is trying to make the youth aware of the grave consequences of envy, because it is harmful, not only to the person envied, but to the person who envies.

With a same sense of gravity, the speaker next warns his young friend about the sin of anger:

> Be calm in arguing: for fierceness makes
> Errour a fault, and truth discourtesie.
> . . . . . .
> . . . but anger is not love,
> Nor wisdome neither: therefore gently move.
> (307-308; 311-312)

Even though, in this passage, the speaker is severe, there is gentleness in the tone of his admonition. Furthermore, he gives his friend a logical reason to avoid the sin of anger. Thus, one never loses sight of the purpose of the poem--to prepare the youth to approach God. He cannot be forced to purify his motives and refine his manners; he must be guided carefully toward the church. Thus, Herbert treats the sins of anger and envy within the larger context of his advice about using care and wisdom in daily conversation and behavior.[69] By using this technique, the poet makes the advice more receptive to the immature young person.

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[69]Joseph H. Summers, The Heirs of Donne and Jonson, p. 90.

In a similar manner, pride, the most serious of the Seven Deadly Sins, is treated along with less serious matters. For instance, stanza 55 regarding usefulness and kindness is followed by one containing a negative admonition regarding the dangers of pride. Then, a positive admonition for the youth to acquire humility, the opposite of pride, is given. The speaker states, "Pitch thy behaviour low, thy projects high; / So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be" (331-332). Of course, one of the sins that the youth must overcome is that of pride and he is urged by the speaker, in this passage, to shun pride by cultivating an attitude of humility.

The foregoing discussion of Herbert's references to the vices and virtues indicates that in the overall framework of "Church-porch," he has treated the Seven Deadly Sins in their traditional order, although Summers observes, "The traditional order is so embellished that few readers seem to have noticed its existence."[70] Obviously, Herbert intended to show that, before the youth can enter the church or the Christian life, he must purge himself of sins, especially of the deadly sins, and acquire the virtues that will make him acceptable to God.

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[70] Loc. cit.

In the concluding fourteen stanzas (64-77) of "Church-porch," Herbert does not mention sin, although he maintains the didactic tone of the earlier stanzas. However, as the youth nears the entrance to the church, the speaker turns his attention from personal and social matters to the religious duties that the youth must assume after he enters the church, all of which are associated with the highest of the Biblical virtues, charity or love. Summers points out that the youth is encouraged to show his love for others by giving alms.[71] "In Alms regard thy means, and others merit. / . . . / Joyn hands with God to make a man to live" (373; 376). However, the youth is also instructed to show his love for God by giving tithes and performing certain religious acts. The speaker further states: "Restore to God his due in tithe and time: / . . . / Sundaies observe: think when the bells do chime, / 'Tis angels musick; therefore come not late" (385; 387-388). Another important aspect of the speaker's final instructions to the youth regards prayers (both private and public) and public worship. For instance, he writes, "Through private prayer be a brave designe, / Yet publick hath more promises, more love" (397-398).

This portion of the poem, then, directly anticipates

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[71] Ibid., p. 91.

the youth's actual entry into the church. Here, he is instructed in the proper attitude toward the worship services of the church:

> Let vain or busie thoughts have there no part:
> Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither.
> Christ purg'd his temple; so must thou thy heart.
> (421-423)

Also, in these lines, the poet establishes the analogous relationship between the Old Testament Hebrew temple as God's dwelling place and the human heart as the temple of God. However, following the instructions given in "Church-porch," the youth must prepare himself to become a holy temple in which God's presence can reside.[72] Commenting on this aspect of "Church-porch," Rickey observes that the poem is designed for the refinement of the young man's manners and morals.[73] Although, this is a sound observation, one suggests that Herbert's purpose extends far beyond the ethical realm to the personal spiritual realm. "Church-porch" contains the pattern that the youth must follow in his progress to the second stage of spiritual development.

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[72]Hanley, op. cit., p. 129.

[73]Mary Ellen Rickey, Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert, p. 93.

In the church, he will become a mature, devout Christian. On an even higher level, he will become a temple of God, a microcosm of the larger church made up of other Christian souls, each striving toward a union with God.

Herbert's short, transitional poem entitled "Superliminare," occupies a strategic position between "Church-porch" and "The Church." It clarifies much of the confusion concerning Herbert's purpose behind "Church-porch." The "Superliminare" is a place of purification and consecration experienced before the youth enters the church. In the Hebrew temple, a basin of water was placed at the entrance of the holy place. Before entering, the priests were purified according to a prescribed ritual. According to the Biblical account, God instructed Moses,

> Take the Levites [priests] from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification upon them . . . .[74]

Thus, Herbert likens his purpose in "Church-porch" to the purpose of this ancient ritual. He states:

> Thou, whom the former precepts have
> Sprinkled and taught, how to behave
> Thy self in church; approach and taste
> The churches mysticall repast.
> (1-4)

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[74]Numbers viii.6-7.

Then, as the priests, after purification, were allowed to enter the sacred portion of the temple, the holy place, to offer sacrifices and prayers of thanksgiving to God, so the youth, after his purification, is ready to participate in church rituals and prayers. However, the youth still has spiritual lessons to learn and obstacles to overcome, but he has acquired a basic understanding of proper Christian conduct and has been directed toward the spiritual realm.[75] He is now entering the phase of his life-long struggle that will eventually bring him into perfect union with his God.

In "Church-porch," Herbert employs a didactic tone for the purpose of describing the young man's preparation for becoming a member of the Christian church. Through the use of an analogy of the courtyard of the Old Testament temple to the church-porch, Herbert effectively indicates that the young man must be purified and his character must be refined before he can enter the church. Thus, the speaker gives the young man practical advice about his personal conduct and his relationship with other people. The most important aspect of his preparation is purification from sin. He is warned to avoid the Seven Deadly Sins and encouraged to

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[75]Joseph H. Summers, The Heirs of Donne and Jonson, p. 95.

cultivate the traditional Christian virtues. Consequently, through stern but kindly admonition, the youth is gently lead along the path toward the church. At the conclusion of "Church-porch," he has made himself presentable to God. Thus, Herbert has, throughout this poem, expressed the preliminary steps of the soul in its quest for communication with the Divine.

CHAPTER III

"THE CHURCH": THE SOUL'S PROGRESS TOWARD UNION WITH GOD

Having been instructed in personal and social conduct and in his religious duties, the youth addressed in "Church-porch" is now prepared to enter the church, where his first religious act is to present his heart to God as an altar of sacrifice. In this act of submission to God, he identifies himself with Christ, the supreme sacrifice.

The altar of the heart is analogous to the altar of the holy place, the second division of the Hebrew temple. Summers notes that, traditionally, "the Hebrew altar which was built of unhewn stones was a type of the heart of man, hewn not by man's efforts but by God alone."[76] Upon the Hebrew altar, the priests offered sacrifices to God as an act of worship. These rituals had significant meaning; they were not mere forms, according to the psalmist. The poem, "The Altar," reminds one of David's penitential prayer:

> For thou [God] desireth not sacrifice; else would
> I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

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[76]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 141.

> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.[77]

With regard to influence upon Herbert's work, Asals observes that, in Herbert's day, the Psalms were thought to reflect the intents and motives of the heart, marred by Adam's sin and made pure by Christ.[78] However, the New Testament writers also provide examples which convey the same idea. For instance, St. Paul writes,

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.[79]

Not only is the Christian called upon to present his body as a sacrifice, but he is urged to devote himself to God's service. Herbert expresses this thought in the last line of his poetic prayer: "O let thy blessed sacrifice be mine, / And sanctifie this Altar to be thine" (15-16).

In the poem, "The Sacrifice," the analogy between Old Testament animal sacrifices centered in the temple and the New Testament concept of a greater, all-sufficient sacrifice

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[77]Psalm li.16-17.

[78]Heather Asals, "The Voice of George Herbert's 'The Church,'" ELH, XXXVI (1969), 513.

[79]Romans xii.1.

in Christ is evident. Herbert is, of course, relying upon a traditional interpretation of the Scriptures for this concept. According to his view, "the Mosaic sacrifices were considered types of the one true Sacrifice in which Christ shed blood for the remission of sins once for all time."[80] Thus, in "The Sacrifice," Christ, the speaker, in moving poetic form, conveys the primary purpose of His divine sacrifice, e. g., to provide a means whereby man's sins can be forgiven and he can be reconciled to God, a thought expressed in the line: "[Jesus] who grasps the earth and heaven with his fist" (130). Several stanzas later, a more specific delineation of the purpose of Christ's sacrifice is given:

> Then with a scarlet robe they me [Jesus] aray;
> Which shews by bloud to be the onely way
> And cordiall left to repair mans decay.
> (57-59)

White observes that seventeenth-century theologians were preoccupied with the gravity of sin.[81] Therefore, it follows that a longing to find forgiveness would be paramount in their minds. Herbert, no exception, firmly believes in the

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[80]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 141.

[81]White, op. cit., p. 180.

reconciliation of man to God through Christ.

In the next poem of "The Church," entitled "Thanksgiving," the speaker, a man probably representing all men, answers Christ, the speaker of "The Sacrifice," and expresses his desire to identify himself with Christ in his passion. In this identification, he hopes to find forgiveness for his sins and peace with God. Also, he desires to repay Christ for his substitutionary death. Thus, he asks,

> Shall I weep bloud?
> . . . . . .
> Shall I be scourged, flouted, boxed, sold?
> . . . . . .
> . . . how then shall I imitate thee?
> (5; 7; 15)

Furthermore, he offers to give alms and become a monastic if these acts will recompense God for the sacrifice of his son. But the speaker soon realizes that it is impossible to repay God for his sacrifice because the debt of sin is too great. Therefore, the speaker concludes with these words: "Then for thy passion--I will do for that-- / Alas, my God, I know not what" (49-50). He now understands that he can do nothing to merit God's grace.

In "The Agonie," sin is the speaker's main concern, because it caused Christ's sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane. The price of man's redemption entailed bitter

agony for Christ. The same thought is expressed in the next short poem, "The Sinner," but instead of God's reaching down to the soul, in this poem, the soul is reaching up to God. The speaker acknowledges his unworthiness to receive forgiveness, but, nevertheless, he pleads:

> . . . Lord restore thine image, heare my call:
> And though my hard heart scarce to thee can grone,
> Remember that thou did'st write in stone.
> (12-14)

Again, Herbert's reliance upon the typological interpretation of the Scriptures is important. In the days of Moses, God wrote his commandments on tablets of stone, but in this poem, the speaker is pleading with his God to engrave the New Testament law of love upon his penitent and purified heart.

Herbert's development of his theme is firmly based upon the individual's need for reconciliation with God. Since Christ's passion makes possible this reconciliation, it is in harmony with these basic assumptions that Herbert, in the next five poems, follows the church's liturgical calendar. To him, the meaning and significance of church ritual should be fully understood by the worshipper. Hence, the ritual is personalized. For instance, in "Good Friday," the death of Christ is commemorated, and its meaning for the individual is carefully explained. As in "The Sinner," the

speaker realizes his unworthiness to approach God, but, at the same time, he longs for communion with the Divine. Consequently, he pleads for God to dwell within his heart: "Sinne being gone, oh fill the place, / And keep possession with thy grace" (29-30). In "Redemption," the worshipper views Christ on the cross and understands the meaning of redemption. In a similar manner, the speaker in the poem, "Sepulchre," laments Christ's death and rejection by his own people, the Jews. The resurrection of Christ is treated in "Easter" and "Easter-wings." However, true to his emphasis on a vital, personal relationship between God and the soul, the speaker of "Easter" identifies himself with Christ. He uses appropriate flight imagery to depict his feelings:

> Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
> Without delayes,
> Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
> With him mayst rise.
> (1-3)

The speaker believes that Christ's resurrection makes possible his own future resurrection. Thus, he identifies himself with Christ as Christ, through his incarnation, identified himself with the fallen human race. Stewart believes that Christ's incarnation makes possible a restoration of the

state of the human race before the Fall.[82] Thus, the speaker is confident of his identification with the Divine, and the Easter message brings him such joy that he exclaims,

> With thee [Christ]
> O let me rise
> As larks, harmoniously
> And sing this day thy victories.
> (6-9)

According to the speaker, then, this relationship with Christ will enable him to rise in spirit to the heavenly realm.

In "The Church," the sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, are important, because they symbolize spiritual concepts concerning the soul. Bowers believes that Herbert's purpose in the sequence of poems following "Easter" is to depict the ideal existence of the Christian in the new dispensation of grace, initiated by Christ's resurrection.[83] Therefore, these poems are vital in Herbert's development of the theme. In "Holy Baptisme I," the speaker recognizes that his sins separate him from God. According to Bloomfield, since this sense of alienation between God and the soul is often expressed in medieval literature, this concept is

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[82]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden, p. 140.

[83]Fredson Bowers, "Herbert's Sequential Imagery: 'The Temper,'" MP, LIX (1962), 211.

probably a part of Herbert's literary heritage, but he makes it distinctly his own by expressing the remedy for the soul's separation from God.[84] Thus, the speaker of the poem believes in the efficacy of Baptism which symbolizes the flow of water and blood from Jesus' side at the crucifixion. Christ's atonement repaired the broken fellowship between the human and the Divine, for the speaker addresses Christ with these words, "In you [Christ] Redemption measures all my time, / And spreads the plaister equall to the crime" (10-11).

Whereas "Church-porch" provides an account of the elementary rudiments and the refinements of the youth's character in preparation for his entry into the church, the poems thus far in "The Church" seem to lay the spiritual foundation for the individual's communion with God. Now, the youth has been received into the spiritual body of Christ, and his relationship with Christ has been established through his recognition of Christ's redemption and through the sacrament of Baptism. By these means, one becomes increasingly aware of the youth's desire for spiritual maturity.

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[84]Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 180.

The virtues that the youth acquired in "Church-porch" and the faith he has gained since entering the church proper are now to be tested. In the poem, "Nature," he addresses God, requesting the Divine Spirit to refine his spiritual nature: "O smooth my rugged heart" (13). This refinement can only be accomplished through suffering and affliction. Thus, in the poem, "Affliction I," the spiritual and perhaps physical struggles to test his devotion become evident. However, in the second stanza, a maturing individual looks back to his entry into the church and recalls his initial joy and wonder:

> When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,
> I thought the service brave:
> So many joys I writ down for my part.
> (1-3)

He recalls that he was delighted and inspired by the beautiful ritual of the church. Herbert felt that meditating upon the order in the world and in the ritual of the church was refreshing to the soul.[85] The speaker's first experiences within the church were pleasant and full of God's blessings: "At first thou [God] gav'st me milk and sweetnesses; / I had my wish and way" (19-20). But, soon, the tone changes as

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[85]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 84.

he tells how sickness lays him low, and he complains, "Sorrow was all my soul" (29). Now, his former joy and lightheartedness have disappeared. He recalls: "I was entangled in the world of strife" (41). The speaker is in great despair, but he affirms his faith in God at the close of the poem. In this connection, White observes that, even in Herbert's poems such as "Nature," which expresses conflict and discouragement and describes the speaker's uneven progress through life, the poet is able to conclude with confidence that God is present.[86] The reaffirmation in the concluding lines of "Nature" is particularly illustrative of Herbert's attitude: "Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot, / Let me not love, if I love thee not" (65-66). Like Job, the speaker's trust in his God remains steadfast.

The next poems, "Repentance," "Faith," and "Prayer," lead quite naturally to the poem, "Holy Communion," because, before the speaker can reach a higher level of spiritual maturity, he must undergo further preparation by means of church ritual. The penitent soul, although he has already been purified, must continually return to the church to be cleansed of the defilement of sin. In fact, the sense of

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[86]White, op. cit., p. 189.

sin and failure never leaves him. He pleads with God, "Cut me not off for my most foul transgression: / I do confesse my foolishnesse" (15-16).

The next step that the speaker must take after he has confessed his sins is to exercise faith in Christ's redemption. He believes that " . . . where sinne placeth me in Adam's fall, / Faith sets me higher in his glorie" (19-20). Therefore, through faith, his soul reaches upward toward God. Then, through prayer, he progresses steadily toward the vital relationship with God that he expects to attain in the ritual of Holy Communion. In the poem, "Prayer I," he contends,

> Prayer the churches banquet . . .
> The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage
> The Christians plummet sounding heav'n and earth.
> (1-3)

In this passage, it is evident that the speaker is attempting to reach his God. Prayer is the vehicle that carries the human soul to the heavenly realm. Palmer notes that Herbert's God has human characteristics. Therefore, one is able to communicate with him in a highly personal manner.[87] Through

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[87]George Herbert Palmer (ed.), The English Works of George Herbert, I, 101.

prayer, the soul can, at least for the moment, rise above the earthly sphere and reach the Divine.

In prayer, the soul reaches upward to God, whereas in the ritual of Holy Communion, God spans the distance between earth and heaven, reaching down to the human level. The symbolic meaning of the literal bread and wine becomes real to the speaker, for he states,

> But by the way of nourishment and strength
> Thou creep'st into my breast;
> Making thy way my rest.
> (7-9)

Thus, through the ritual of Holy Communion, the speaker momentarily becomes one with his God. Consequently, the ecstasy of the experience is almost too great for his mortal spirit to bear, and he exclaims:

> Give me my captive soul, or take
> My bodie also thither.
> Another lift like this will make
> Them both to be together.
> (25-28)

Although the speaker senses an intimate spiritual communion with God through his participation in church ritual, at the same time, he realizes that he is bound to the earthly realm by his mortality. Concerning Herbert's expression of this idea, Carnes observes that " . . . there is a double pull of the images which, like the soul of their poet, look both

earthward and heavenward . . . ."[88] The soul desires to rise to a high spiritual level but is often prevented from rising by its ties with the natural world.

The sense of imperfect union with God that the speaker experiences in "Holy Communion" prompts him to offer a song of praise to God in the poem, "Antiphon I," that follows. The flight imagery of this poem indicates the speaker's assurance of God's presence, for he states:

> The heav'ns are not too high,
> His praise may thither flie:
> The earth is not too low,
> His praises may grow.
> (3-6)

Again, one becomes aware of the speaker's desire to bring heaven and earth together. Herbert believed that heaven actually exists, and the soul can enter its confines at will.[89] Through Christ's sacrifice, commemorated in the sacrament of Holy Communion, the way is opened for the repentant worshipper to come to God. The individual, though he is bound to the earth by his humanity, is, as a member of the church, also a spiritual entity. Man's body is temporal, but his soul is eternal. Thus, Stewart likens the soul in

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[88]Carnes, op. cit., p. 519.

[89]Rickey, op. cit., p. 169.

the church to a plant growing in a garden.[90] By virtue of his inclusion in the church, the speaker can enjoy certain spiritual benefits. Bottrall remarks that the institutional church, though imperfect, is the instrument God uses to convey eternal truth and provide assistance to the soul.[91] According to Herbert's view, as long as the individual understands the meaning underlying the symbolism of church ritual, he can derive personal inspiration and spiritual benefit from the observance of these forms of worship.

The poems in "The Church" discussed thus far have centered around the observances of the Easter season and the two sacraments of the Protestant Church. There has been a logical progression in the spiritual maturity of the speaker. The next group of poems, beginning with "Love I," seems to be centered around the next important observance on the liturgical calendar, Whitsuntide.[92] This sequence of poems is significant with regard to Herbert's development of the theme of the entire Temple, because herein he describes the

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[90]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden, p. 149.

[91]Bottrall, op. cit., p. 62.

[92]Brewster S. Ford, "The Influence of the Prayer Book on the Shape of George Herbert's The Temple," DA, XXV (1964), 1353.

conflicts and the unsteady progress of the soul toward its union with God.

In "Love I," the message of God's love, expressed through the redemption that he provided in Christ, is rejected by the world, but in "Love II," the speaker clearly states his acceptance of God's grace. Not only does he speak for himself, but he includes other souls in his petition to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. One should recall that the Holy Spirit first manifested himself to the early Christians on the Day of Pentecost (Whitsuntide), forty days after Christ's ascension. Therefore, it seems appropriate that the speaker in "Love II" addresses the Holy Spirit rather than God, the Father, or Christ, the Son. Furthermore, it is significant that the speaker addresses the Holy Spirit as "Immortal Heat" because, according to the Biblical account, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven " . . . there appeared unto them [Jesus' followers gathered in the upper room] cloven tongues like as of fire . . . ."[93] Therefore, the symbol of fire or heat represents God's presence indwelling the human heart. Consequently, the speaker can pray,

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[93]Acts ii.3.

> Immortal 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.
> (1-5)

According to these lines, the speaker is vexed by his enemy, sin, and he wants to be refined by God's symbolic fire which will destroy all of his impurities and, thereby, make possible a close relationship between him and God. Thus, his statement implies that a joining of the human spirit and the Divine Spirit cannot be attained until his heart is thoroughly purged of sin.

The next poem, "The Temper," is one of Herbert's most well-known pieces, perhaps because it so graphically depicts the human soul in conflict. This poem shows the efforts of the soul to maintain a steady communion with God. The fluctuating moods and the conflicts that the speaker describes are typical of every Christian's struggles toward spiritual maturity. Thus, the reader can readily identify with him. The kind of struggle that Herbert depicts is common to every age, but it is also Biblical and traditional. St. Paul, an apostle of the Early Church, experienced somewhat the same conflicts that Herbert's speaker experiences. St. Paul writes, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward

man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind."[94] Thus, in the life of the apostle, there existed a desire to maintain a close communion with God, but sin kept him from the full realization of his objective.

Concerning this matter of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh, Bloomfield, commenting on the views of Cyprian, one of the early church theologians, states that Cyprian believed that struggle between the Christian and the forces of evil is inevitable.[95] Herbert's view, though perhaps not as negative as Cyprian's, has elements of this constant struggle between good and evil in the life of the individual. For instance, the speaker in "The Temper I" expresses his uneven progress toward union with God in these words:

> Although there were some fourtie heav'ns, or more
> Sometimes I peere above them all;
> Sometimes I hardly reach a score,
> Sometimes to hell I fall.
>
> (5-8)

In this passage, it is apparent that although the speaker has a strong inclination to transcend everything earthly,

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[94]Romans vii.22-23.

[95]Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 64.

his capacity to comprehend the Divine is limited by his mortality and hindered by sin. He is, therefore, able to catch only glimpses of God's glory.

The conflicts depicted in "The Temper I" contrast, of course, with the confidence expressed in many of the poems in the opening section of "The Church." For instance, in "Prayer I" and in "Holy Communion," the speaker achieved a high level of spiritual awareness, even though his faith had not been severely tested by suffering. But in "The Temper I," he seems to be engaged in a bitter struggle between his human will and the divine will of his God. He pleads with God, "O rack me not to such a vast extent" (9). However, his true desire is still to be refined and fashioned into a temple fit for God's habitation. Therefore, at the conclusion of the poem, he relinquishes his will to God's will and agrees to allow God to exercise a sovereignty over his heart. Furthermore, he realizes that, whether he is raised to the heights of spiritual victory or is thrown down to the earth, his faith in God will sustain him. Through life's bitter experiences, the speaker begins to realize that his journey from earth to heaven will not be easy; it will be

marked by temptations and struggles.[96] Like St. Paul who wrote, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,"[97] the speaker is striving for a heavenly goal.

According to Summers, the writers of Herbert's day expected that human existence would not be entirely free from pain and distress.[98] Therefore, although some of Herbert's poems in "The Church" reach a high plateau of communion with God, others, like "The Temper," express the transitory nature of man's relationship with God. However, Herbert's recognition of human limitations does not prevent him from constantly aspiring to a state of greater spiritual awareness. The poem, "Whitsunday," depicts another high point in the speaker's religious experience. In this poem, the dove, the traditional symbol of the Holy Spirit, is the vehicle for the speaker's flight to the heavenly realm. His prayer is:

> Listen sweet Dove unto my song,
> And spread thy golden wings in me;

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[96]Joseph H. Summers, "Herbert's Form," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 1066.

[97]Philippians iii.14.

[98]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 87.

> Hatching my tender heart so long,
> Till it get wing, and flie away with thee.
> (1-4)

Also, in this poem, the speaker prays for the restoration of the ideal conditions that prevailed at the beginning of the Christian era. In this connection, he writes, "Where is that fire which once descended / On thy Apostles?" (5-6). Realizing that God drew near to His followers and communed with them in the past, the speaker longs for a similar visitation from God's Spirit. Thus, he concludes his prayer by stating:

> Lord, though we change, thou art the same;
> The same sweet God of love and light:
> Restore this day, for thy great name
> Unto his ancient and miraculous right.
> (25-28)

In other words, he petitions God to grant him the same sense of Divine presence that the apostles experienced.

The next poem entitled "Grace" is another example of the effective development of Herbert's theme. In this poem, the speaker is burdened with the cares of life; the battle between righteousness and sin rages in his heart. He laments, "Sinne is still hammering my heart / Unto a hardness, void of love" (17-18). But his sincere prayer is to be united with God, even if death is the means of attaining that desired state. The closing stanza of the poem

expresses the speaker's earnest prayer:

> O come! for thou dost know the way:
> Or if to me thou wilt not move,
> Remove me, where I need not say,
> Drop from above.
> (21-24)

Grierson, whose comments concerning the overall tone of Herbert's poetry can be applied particularly to this short poem, contends that Herbert's poetry " . . . is the record of God's wooing of the soul of Herbert . . . and Herbert's wooing of God, a record of conflict and fluctuating moods . . . ."[99]

It becomes increasingly evident that, as the youth matures, he is faced with afflictions and distressing conflicts that test his devotion to God. For example, in "Affliction II," the speaker's suffering is almost more than he can endure. His discouragement is expressed in his plea to God, "Kill me not ev'ry day, / Thou Lord of life" (1-2). On this occasion, God seems cruel and unmerciful. However, in the next poem, "Mattens," the speaker reaffirms his faith in a loving God who is vitally concerned about him: "My God, what is a heart, / That thou shouldst it so eye, and

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[99]H. J. C. Grierson, Cross-Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century, p. 216.

wooe" (9-10). Not only has the pendulum swung from a low point of discouragement to a high point of faith and hope, but the speaker's assurance seems to raise him to a higher spiritual level than he has heretofore reached. Thus, he concludes the poem on a high note of victory:

> Teach me thy love to know;
> That this new light, which now I see
> May both the work and workman show:
> Then by a sunne-beam I will climbe to thee.
> (17-20)

The speaker expresses, in symbolic language, his desire to rise to a more perfect spiritual state and take his flight to God.

The next group of poems, beginning with "Church-monuments" and including "Church-musick," "Church-lock and Key," "The Church Floore," and "The Windows," may be called Herbert's church furniture poems, unique because of their concrete imagery. Since Herbert uses the features of a literal English church, one feels that the poet is touring the church building. However, Watson believes that

> . . . when he [Herbert] names poems in The Temple after actual features of the church . . . his concern is neither that of an architect nor of the tourist. It is devotional, theological, always analogical.[100]

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[100]George Watson, "The Fabric of Herbert's Temple," Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institute, XXVI (1963), 357.

Thus, in "Church-musick," an important truth concerning union with God is expressed. Music becomes the wings that carry the worshipper's soul to God. The speaker addresses "music," and describes its function in the church service: "Now I in you without a bodie move, / Rising and falling with your wings" (5-6). For Herbert, himself a lover of music, this medium becomes an essential part of church ritual, because it is an aid to worship. Thus, he concludes the poem with the statement, " . . . if I travell in your [music's] companie, / You know the way to heavens doore" (11-12). He is relying on music to lift his soul to God.

"Church-lock and Key," the second furniture poem, is closely related to the dominant theme, also. The literal church lock is analogous to the sin that prevents one's entrance into the invisible church and, thus, separates one from God. The speaker understands the gravity of sin, for he states, "I know it is my sinne, which locks thine eares, / And binds thy hands" (1-2). The literal key to the church door, then, is analogous to Christ whose redemptive act opens the door to the church and makes a way for the soul to be reconciled with God. Faith in Christ unlocks the door into God's presence.

In "The Church Floore," the floor of the literal English

church is analogous with the human heart. The heart is the building material that the Architect, God; uses to construct the floor of his invisible church. Summers explains the Protestant view concerning the foundation of the church and points out its contrast to the Roman Catholic view that St. Peter is the foundation of the church. He notes, of course, the Herbert held the Protestant position that the true church is built upon the confession of individuals that Christ is the Son of God.[101] Each Christian soul, then, united with Christ, the head of the church, becomes a "rock," a part of the floor, in the invisible building of God, the church. According to Herbert's concept, the literal church floor is a symbol of the heart. The imperfections of this heart are emphasized in the poem. It becomes soiled by stains and sins, but

> Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore,
> Blows all the dust about the floore:
> But while he thinks to spoil the room he sweeps.
> (16-18)

Thus, through the most tragic event of human existence, death, the heart is made clean and pure.

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[101]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 126.

In the last furniture poem, "The Windows," Herbert concerns himself with the priest's heart which is analogous with the literal windows of the English church. The priest's heart is described as a temple of "brittle crazie glasse" (2), but God uses this flawed instrument to convey his message of grace to the members of the congregation. Through this weak, imperfect heart, men can catch a glimpse of the Divine.

In "Trinitie Sunday" that follows "The Windows," Herbert's preoccupation with sin and his constant striving to maintain an unbroken communion with God is particularly evident. He acknowledges, here, that he has been redeemed by Christ and is a member of the church, but he still struggles against sin. Therefore, he addresses God, requesting forgiveness for his sins, reaffirming his desire to please God. He concludes the poem with a plea to God to grant to him the highest Christian virtues--faith, hope, and charity; whereby he can " . . . runne, rise, rest . . ." (9) in God's presence. Again, the concept of rising above the imperfect material world to a place of communion and rest in God's presence is a deep concern of the speaker. Herbert may have found a Biblical pattern for this poem in the writings of the psalmist, David, who writes: "Oh, that I had wings like

a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest."[102] The desire to be at peace with God or at rest in heaven is a characteristic of the remainder of "The Church." The kind of rest to which Herbert aspires comes only at death when the soul returns to its Creator.[103]

"Affliction III" deals with the soul's relationship to God in somewhat the same manner as the other affliction poems. One notes that affliction always brings the speaker nearer to his God. Although he is grieving and suffering severely, the speaker understands the purpose of his affliction. He is convinced that " . . . the sigh then onely is / A gale to bring me sooner to my blisse" (11-12).

"The Starre" appropriately follows "Affliction III," since after a period of affliction, the soul takes its flight, via a star, to the heavenly abode of God. One recalls that in "Church-musick" the speaker desired to rise to heaven on the wings of music, but in this present poem he wants to attach himself to one of the stars and fly away to heaven. Christ's dwelling place, according to the speaker, is in the celestial sphere. Thus, he wants to

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[102]Psalm lv.6.

[103]Carnes, op. cit., p. 520.

dwell

> . . . among the beams, which crown the face
> Of him, who dy'd to part
> Sinne and my heart.
>
> (22-24)

He reasons that, by joining the stars in the heavens, he can be in God's presence.

"Sunday" is a key poem depicting the struggle of the soul to reach God. The evil forces that bind the soul to earth and pull it toward spiritual death are somehow weakened by the Christian's observance of worship and rest on Sunday. In this regard, the poet says,

> Man had straight forward gone
> To endless death: but thou dost pull
> And turn us round . . . .
>
> (15-17)

This statement is another indication that Herbert was firmly convinced that the natural tendency of man is to drift away from God, but that, through the observance of Sunday as a day of worship and rest, his downward course can be reversed. Walton comments that, in Herbert's ministry at Bemerton, he constantly explained the meaning of the church's worship services and emphasized the purpose of every religious observance. For instance, Herbert taught his parishioners ". . . that the <u>whole Service of the Church</u>, was a reasonable, and therefore an acceptable Sacrifice to

God."[104] It may be assumed that, as a faithful priest, Herbert urged his parishioners to observe Sunday, not only because it was the custom to do so, but because Sunday commemorates the resurrection of Christ. He also expected that, by contemplating their religious beliefs, they would enrich their own lives and bring honor to God. Finally, the observance of Sunday becomes the vehicle with which to speed the soul to heaven. The speaker exclaims:

> O let me take thee [Sunday] at the bound,
> Leaping with thee from sev'n to sev'n,
> Till that we both, being toss'd from earth,
> File hand in hand to heav'n.
> (60-63)

An understanding of the religious meaning of Sunday prepares the individual to enjoy heavenly bliss.

Although a high level of spiritual awareness is reached in "Starre" and in "Sunday," one is soon reminded that the speaker is still engaged in a spiritual struggle on the earthly level. In the poem, "Deniall," his prayers do not seem to reach God, and he is severely perplexed. Consequently, he laments,

> Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:
> My breast was full of fears
> And disorder.
> (3-5)

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[104] Walton, op. cit., p. 295.

Disorder, to Herbert, represents evil, while order and harmony represent good. Thus, the disorder of the heart prevents the speaker from enjoying communion with God. Herbert, when he directed that the manuscript of The Temple be given to his friend, Nicholas Ferrar, described the collection of poems as " . . . a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul . . . ."[105] "Deniall," in particular, shows evidence of an unresolved conflict between the human soul and God, for in plaintive tones, the speaker cries, "Both knees and heart, in crying night and day, / Come, come, my God, O come" (13-14). This poem and several others in "The Church" expressing a similar thought, led White to conclude that Herbert's primary concern is with maintaining constant communion with his God.[106] In "Deniall," God's presence has alluded the speaker. Therefore, he expresses a sense of confusion and anxiety.

One of Herbert's best poetic expressions of the dual nature of man, which is the source of his many conflicts, is in the poem entitled "Colossians 3.3," an elaboration of St. Paul's statement, "Set your affection on things above,

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[105] Ibid., p. 314.

[106] White, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."[107] Herbert expresses the tension created by the dual nature of man in these lines: "One life [mortal life] is wrapt in flesh and tends to earth: / The other [immortal life] winds toward Him [God]" (5-6). The implication is, of course, that man's mortality hinders him in his flight to God. His soul is willing to aspire to heavenly things, but his body (his fleshly desires) binds him to a low level. However, the lines that follow express the thought that a proper balance between the material and the spiritual aspects of a person's life should, to a certain extent, alleviate the tension between soul and body. This balance is available in the Christian faith, for the speaker states that religion " . . . taught me to live here so, That still one eye / Should aim and shoot at that which Is on high" (7-8). However, it becomes obvious that the spiritual life of the soul should occupy a place of superior importance in the speaker's thinking and in his daily life.

The progress of the individual soul is also Herbert's primary concern in the poem, "Lent." Here, the speaker advocates temperance and fasting for the purpose of becoming

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[107]Colossians iii.2-3.

holy, although he recognizes his human limitations. He says,

> It's true, we cannot reach Christs forti'th day
> . . . . . .
> We cannot reach our Saviours puritie;
> Yet are we bid, Be holy ev'n as he.
> (31; 34-35)

Although the Christian cannot be expected to endure a forty-day fast as did Christ after his baptism, he is instructed to imitate Christ's actions and attitudes. The Christian should aspire to be like Christ because, according to the speaker,

> Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
> Is much more sure to meet with him, then one
> That travelleth by-wayes.
> (37-39)

Therefore, the ultimate purpose of observing the Lenten season is connected with Herbert's development of the theme.

"The Pearl" graphically depicts the conflicting forces that pull upon the soul that exists in the sphere somewhere between earth and heaven. The speaker complains about his precarious position:

> My stuffe is flesh, not brasse; my senses live,
> And grumble oft, that they have more in me
> Then he that curbs them, being one to five:
> Yet I love thee [God].
> (27-30)

Although his heart's desire is for spiritual things, he is

more forcefully drawn to sensual pleasures and natural pursuits than he is to God. The speaker knows his helplessness and recognizes that, if he is to reach God, the Divine Spirit must extend mercy to him, a weak mortal. Thus, the speaker concludes the poem with an expression of this thought:

> . . . thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,
> Did both conduct and teach me, how by it
> To climbe to thee.
>
> (38-40)

Palmer observes that Herbert's poetry depicts the dual nature of man whose natural inclinations do not always correspond with God's purposes.[108] "The Pearl" is a clear statement of this concept. The speaker recognizes that a vast gulf separates man and God and must be spanned before union between the human and the Divine can occur.

In the poem, "Affliction IV," the separation of God and the human soul, the main thought of "The Pearl," is further developed. The speaker, with great intensity, describes his plight. He says that he is " . . . a wonder tortur'd in the space / Betwixt this world and that of grace" (5-6). He cannot decide which direction to take

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[108]Palmer, op. cit., I, 154.

because both the material world and the spiritual world compete for his attention.[109] Apparently, he has reached another low ebb in his struggle to maintain a constant communion with his God. In his progress through the Christian life following his entry into the church, the speaker has experienced both victories and defeats; moments when he has had a sense of God's presence and periods of distress and separation from God. Perhaps, as Summers suggests, the Christian can never bring his life into perfect harmony with God's will because, as he matures spiritually, he becomes increasingly aware of his faults and failings.[110] Nonetheless, the speaker pleads for a conformity of his will to God's will:

> . . . dissolve the knot,
> As the sunne scatters by his light
> All the rebellions of the night.
> (22-24)

The sun (light) represents righteousness; whereas, the night (darkness) represents evil. Therefore, the speaker prays that his rebellion against God will disappear when the light of righteousness casts its beams into his heart.

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[109]Carnes, op. cit., p. 523.

[110]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 59.

In this poem, the struggle between the flesh and the spirit is intense. The speaker grieves because of his plight and exclaims, "My thoughts are all a case of knives, / Wounding my heart" (7-8). Miner's comment concerning the tension in Herbert's poetry applies particularly well to this poem. He believes that Herbert is endeavoring to find a satisfactory answer to certain basic conflicts that exist within his own soul.[111] In "Affliction IV," the speaker is troubled primarily about his inner conflicts. His thoughts are not in accord with his lofty spiritual aspirations, but he concludes the poem by acknowledging that God permits suffering to refine the human soul and bring it at last to heaven.

The poem, "Man," following "Affliction IV," includes an eloquent expression of Herbert's dominant theme, union with God. Whereas, in the former poem, suffering and distress are emphasized, in this poem, the noble qualities of the human heart are praised, and man's place in the scheme of the universe is fully recognized. According to the speaker, man was created to be the temple of God. Therefore, he desires God to dwell in his individual temple, his human

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[111]Miner, op. cit., p. 193.

heart. To God, the speaker prays, "O dwell in it, / That it may dwell with thee at last!" (50-51), implying a desire for God's presence in the here and now as well as an eternal, heavenly relationship with God.

In "Justice I," as in the affliction poems already discussed, the speaker recognizes that his sufferings are a part of God's plan to refine his soul, although he cannot fully understand God's ways, and he feels a sense of alienation from God. These feelings are evident in his complaint:

> My prayers mean thee, yet my prayers stray:
> I would do well, yet sinne the hand hath got:
> My soul doth love thee, yet it loves delay.
> (9-11).

His sins prevent him from enjoying unbroken fellowship with God. He knows that he is weak and cannot fully comprehend God's ways. Nevertheless, he constantly strives, through prayer, to commune with his God.

Herbert's poem, "Miserie," is significant because it depicts the fallen state of the soul and the resulting separation between God and man. Thus, man and God must be reconciled--brought together. The speaker describes the soul's sinful condition in unusual terms:

> Now he [man] is
> A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing
> To raise him to a glimpse of blisse.
> (73-75)

Consequently, Stewart contends that without God, the soul is in the same pitiful state as Adam and Eve were after they were expelled from the Garden of Eden.[112] Fallen man cannot raise himself to heaven; his condition is hopeless without God's intervention. But, according to the poet, God's love is greater than man's sin. He observes,

> They [sinners] quarrell thee, and would give over
> The bargain made to serve thee: but thy love
> Holds them unto it . . . .
> (25-27)

In other words, those souls predestined by God to eternal life in heaven, even though they sometimes struggle against God's will, eventually will be drawn to God because his love reaches down to them. With regard to this concept, White believes that an outstanding characteristic of God, as Herbert portrays him, is his mercy toward the human race.[113] Herbert and other literary men of the seventeenth century were firmly convinced of God's love, demonstrated by the gift of his Son to redeem fallen man.[114] Thus, Herbert implies that the individual who is predestined to be

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[112]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden, p. 57.

[113]White, op. cit., p. 181.

[114]Loc. cit.

reconciled to God will eventually find peace with Him.

The union of the human spirit and the Divine Spirit is especially evident in one of Herbert's most famous poems, "Sion," which is placed at the center of "The Church." Perhaps, it is best known for its lines concerning the analogy between the Hebrew temple and the human heart: "And now [in the New Testament dispensation of grace] thy Architecture meets with sinne; / For all thy frame and frabrick is within" (11-12). But Herbert's theme is also presented in his use of flight imagery to portray the soul's desire to attain perfect union with God. However, because the heart is filled with sin, a struggle between God and the soul is inevitable before the soul can attain even momentary communion with God. Addressing God, the speaker states, "Thou art struggling with a peevish heart" (13). Chute notes that, on some occasions, God is the speaker's adversary, while, on other occasions, God is his comrade.[115] However, even when God is depicted as an enemy, he is not harsh and unmerciful, but loving and kind.[116] In this poem, although God seems stern, the outcome of the struggle is joyous, because the

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[115]Chute, op. cit., p. 120.

[116]Loc. cit.

speaker states that his "grones" serve as "wings" on which his soul ascends to heaven.

In the next poem, "Home," Herbert again uses flight imagery. The speaker's longing to rise above the material world is expressed in rather plaintive tones in the first stanza:

> Thy long deferrings wound me to the quick,
> My spirit gaspeth night and day.
> O show thy self to me,
> Or take me up to thee!
>
> (3-6)

The sense of alienation that the speaker feels prompts him to desire death rather than life devoid of God's presence. The intensity of the speaker's emotion is expressed in a refrain, "O show thy self to me, / Or take me up to thee" (5-6), that concludes each stanza of the poem. White comments that Herbert wants to know God in a personal, vital way in this present, earthly realm.[117] To the poet, life without a sense of God's presence is meaningless.

The poem, "Vanitie II," expresses an important thought with regard to the theme. This poem delineates the reason for man's restless state in the world. The poet recognizes that the soul was originally created to commune with God and

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[117]White, op. cit., p. 184.

can never be satisfied while separated from him. Thus, he says,

> If souls be made of earthly mold,
> Let them love gold;
> If born on high,
> Let them unto their kindred flie:
> For they can never be at rest,
> Till they regain their ancient nest.
> (11-16)

Because of the Fall, the human race lost its paradise, along with its privilege to communicate with God as Adam did. Therefore, within each human heart is a restlessness that cannot be satisfied until the heart is at peace with God. In fact, even though the restlessness is somewhat lessened through faith and prayer, it is not eradicated until the soul is united with God in eternity.

The same concept of man's restless state is expressed in "Giddinesse." This poem expresses the folly of the human heart as the speaker exclaims, "Oh what a thing is man! how farre from power, / From settled peace and rest!" (1-2). The implication, of course, is that the disquiet of his soul drives man to seek God.

The dual nature of man is shown in two adjoining poems, "Man's Medley" and "The Storm." The speaker, in "Man's Medley," says that, in contrast to the natural world of animals and plants, man is the citizen of two worlds: "In

soul he mounts and flies, / In flesh he dies" (13-14). His soul is immortal, but his body is mortal.. However, his mortality, according to the speaker in "The Storm," works to the individual's advantage in his ascension to the heavenly realm:

> 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.
> (9-12)

The individual's guilty conscience drives him to seek peace with God. Thus, in a sense, the Fall, because it makes the individual dependent upon divine grace, is fortunate.

In "Justice II," the relationship between God and the individual is clearly explained through Herbert's use of the image of a scale. The speaker considers the scale as a means of elevating his heart to heaven:

> Thy [God's] scales like buckets which attend
> And interchangeably descend,
> Lifting to heaven from this well of tears.
> (16-18)

Pain and sorrow benefit the soul, lifting it upward to God. Through suffering, the soul is refined and prepared to commune with God.

It has been noted that suffering is one means whereby the soul can find communion with God; prayer is also a means

of attaining an intimate relationship with God. Furthermore, prayer assists the soul in becoming increasingly more spiritually refined. "Praise II" expresses the importance of prayer in the individual's religious life. The speaker has confidence that his prayer for forgiveness has been heard. Therefore, he can exclaim, "In my heart, though not in heaven, / I can raise thee" (19-20). Granted, the awareness of God's presence that he experiences is probably transitory, nonetheless, to him it is genuine and meaningful.

The transitory nature of man's union with God, as expressed in "Praise II," is further exemplified in "The Glimpse." In this poem, the speaker is distressed and despondent, because he seems unable to maintain a constant sense of God's presence in his heart. In the first stanza, he expresses his thoughts: "Whither away delight? / Thou cam'st but now; wilt thou so soon depart" (1-2). He recognizes that constant, steady consciousness of God's presence is impossible. Therefore, in the third stanza, he continues his lament, "Thy [God's] short abode and stay / Feeds not, but adds to the desire of meat" (11-12). In these lines, he expresses the conviction that his desire for God's comforting presence is only intensified by these momentary glimpses of the Divine Spirit that he receives from time to

time.

Perhaps, Herbert's most emphatic statement of the conflicts of the soul that aspires to attain union with God is found in "The Collar," Here, the conflict between the speaker's own will and the will of God is great. In fact, it seems almost as if the speaker is struggling with God and defying God's claim upon his soul. In this regard, the speaker lashes out against God: "I struck the board, and cry'd, No more. / I will abroad" (1-2). In an attitude of rebellion, the speaker expresses the idea that he does not want God to direct or control his life.[118] He wants to be free from the conflict between his body and his soul. His outburst, an articulation of his natural, human emotions, is only momentary. When his higher, spiritual sensibilities overpower his natural inclinations, he finally submits to God's will and closes the poem with an expression of submission: "Me thought I heard one calling, Child! / And I reply'd, My Lord" (35-36).

"The Pulley" illustrates the same basic concept described in "The Collar," but it approaches the subject

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[118]Austin Warren, Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism, p. 33.

from God's standpoint rather than from the speaker's point of view. God is depicted, here, as the giver of many good virtues. However, because he knows the human tendency to rebel against his will, he withholds one gift (rest) from his creatures, rationalizing this action by stating,

> . . . if I should . . .
> Bestow this jewell also on my creature,
> He would adore my gifts in stead of me.
> (11-13)

In other words, if the soul could find perfect satisfaction in the natural world and in God's providence alone, he would have no need--no longing--for a better existence. Consequently, man would not strive to be reconciled with God. But, because of this inborn restlessness of soul, he will be drawn to God. Thus, the speaker, God, closes the poem with this thought: "If goodnesse lead him not, yet wearinesse / May toss him to my breast" (19-20). The downward pull of the material world is always opposed to the upward pull of the spiritual world, but, according to Herbert's poetic statement, the soul's restlessness will lead him to God.

The conflict between the natural and spiritual forces so prominent in "The Pulley" is also present in "The Flower," although the poet expresses this conflict in a

slightly different manner. In this poem, he depicts the fluctuating moods of the speaker by likening his times of distress and conflict to the winter season. Thus, the speaker's heart is analogous with the flower that, in the winter, appears to be lifeless. But the heart, like the flower that is resurrected with the coming of spring, is revived by the "light" of God's presence. The speaker observes,

> These [the changing seasons--the times of distress and the times of joy] are thy [God's] wonders, Lord of power,
> Killing and quickening, bringing down to hell
> And up to heaven in an houre.
> (15-17)

The speaker cannot understand God's mysteries and wishes that his relationship with God were more stable. In this regard, he laments, "O that I once past changing were, / Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!" (22-23). This paradise, of course, is in heaven, not on the earth.[119] Although, by virtue of his entry into the church, he has the promise of eternal life, he is plagued by conflicts. His human failures and sins keep him from sensing God's presence at all times. Thus, he longs for the unbroken fellowship

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[119]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden, p. 148.

that will come only when he reaches heaven. In the meantime, however, he resolves to turn his thoughts and aspirations toward the spiritual realm. Hence, he states, "But while I grow in a straight line, / Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own" (29-30).

In the last several poems discussed, Herbert takes a variety of approaches to the conflict between the spiritual and the material realms. For the most part, these poems depict the speaker in a state of anxiety, being torn between his natural desires, which lead him into sin, and his soul, his spiritual consciousness, which desperately longs to lead him to God. The state of unrest caused by this conflict persists. However, beginning with "The Flower," the tone of "The Church" section seems to change in describing a more steady, upward progress of the soul.[120] In this poem, the speaker comes from darkness into the light of God's love. Therefore, he can exclaim,

> And now in age I bud again,
> After so many deaths I live and write;
> I once more smell the dew and rain.
> (36-38)

As the flowers acquire new life with the coming of spring,

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[120]Louis H. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 312.

so his soul is renewed with God's light, and he expresses revitalized confidence in God's provision for him. He comments, "These are thy wonders, Lord of love, / . . . / Thou hast a garden for us, where to hide" (43; 46). At this point, the speaker reconciles himself to the fact that, even though he aspires to a constant, complete union with his God, this is not possible on earth. Martz observes, then, that "The Flower" indicates a kind of spiritual maturity in the life of the speaker. From this point in "The Church," he recollects his struggles and sorrows, but a sense of peace and confidence permeates his heart.[121]

A good illustration of this changed tone is found in "The Twenty-third Psalm," the only adaptation of a Biblical psalm in Herbert's Temple.[122] Here, the speaker expresses complete confidence in God. In a matter-of-fact manner, he says, "While he [God] is mine, and I am his, / What can I want or need?" (3-4). He has not forgotten his human failures, however, for he adds, " . . . if I stray, he [God] doth convert / And bring my minde in frame" (9-10). On the other hand, he does not dwell upon his sins in this poem as he

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[121] Ibid., pp. 312-313.

[122] Ibid., p. 318.

did in several of the poems previously considered.

Perhaps, the crowning poem of "The Church" is "The Banquet," because, in its moving stanzas, the speaker anticipates the time when he will be finally united with his God. In the first stanza, God speaks and welcomes the speaker to the heavenly banquet:

> Welcome sweet and sacred cheer,
> Welcome deare;
> With me, in me, live and dwell.
> (1-3)

According to Summers, Herbert's banquet is the occasion described in Luke xii.37.[123] As an individual member of the church, the bride of Christ, the speaker will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb, described by St. John in the book of Revelation. St. John writes, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."[124] Of course, only those individuals who have prepared themselves for this occasion, by entering the church through Baptism and faith, are invited to the banquet. Those who are invited to the banquet have also been refined and purified through suffering in their earthly lives.

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[123]Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, p. 89.

[124]Revelation xix.9.

With regard to his preparation for the banquet, the speaker recalls,

> When I had forgot my birth [the perfect state before the Fall]
> And on earth
> In delights of earth was drown'd:
> God took bloud and needs would be
> Spilt with me.
>
> (31-35)

Through his incarnation, Christ identified himself with man in his fallen condition. Through his sacrificial death, Christ provided for the reconciliation of the human and the Divine. This banquet, then, is made possible through Christ's redemptive act. For the speaker, the wine of the Communion, representing Christ's blood--his sacrifice--becomes the means whereby he can be united forever with his Saviour in the New Jerusalem, for he states,

> Wine becomes a wing at last.
> For with it alone I flie
> To the skie:
> . . . . . .
> Him I view,
> Who hath done so much for me.
>
> (42-44; 47-48)

However, as long as the speaker is on earth, he is restless and unsettled, always anticipating his entry into the presence of God.[125] But, in his looking forward in time to the

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[125]Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden, p. 21.

ideal relationship with God that is described in "The Banquet," the speaker finds comfort and temporary rest for his soul. Hence, he may still have conflicts and be plagued with sin, but will not descend to the depths of despair. Accordingly, in "A Parodie," he experiences a recurrence of his former conflicts. However, since his confidence is firmly established, he can conclude the poem on a positive note:

> I half beleeve,
> That Sinne sayes true: but while I grieve,
> Thou [God] com'st and dost relieve.
> (28-30)

The sense of God's presence has left him only momentarily, and he quickly regains an assurance that God is with him.

The poems, "Death," "Doomsday," "Judgement," and "Heaven," depict the final stages of the soul's progress toward perfect union with God. The soul reaches its objective in the final poem, "Love III," that celebrates the meeting of the soul and Christ in heaven.[126] In the poem entitled "Judgement," the speaker anticipates his appearance before God to give an account of his life. But he has no fears because he has identified himself with Christ in his righteousness and, thus, will be judged according to Christ's

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[126]Hanley, op. cit., p. 134.

merits, not his own. His confidence is expressed in these lines:

> . . . I resolve when thou shalt call for mine [the record of my deeds],
> That to decline
> And thrust a Testament into thy hand:
> Let that be scann'd
> There thou shalt finde my faults are thine [Christ's].
> (11-15)

In the final poem of "The Church," entitled "Love III," the speaker feels that he is unworthy to enter heaven and enjoy constant communion with God, even though he has been striving all of his life to attain this objective. He confesses, "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back, / Guiltie of dust and sinne" (1-2). But "Love," in the person of Christ, encourages him to partake of the joys of heaven. The speaker is reluctant, but Christ encourages him by saying, "You must sit down . . . and taste my meat" (17). Then, in the speaker's response, "So I did sit and eat" (18), the concept of the banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb, discussed in relation to the poem, "The Banquet," is again used to depict the relationship between the soul and God in eternity. The speaker's conflicts are finally resolved; in heaven, he has attained perfect union with his God.

From the time of his entry into the church through Baptism and personal faith in Christ, the speaker has been

portrayed as one who attends the church services and participates in the symbolic rituals which purify and refine his soul. Also, he has engaged in religious exercises, such as prayer and meditation, that have enabled him to become a mature Christian. Most importantly, throughout his life, he has been striving to maintain a sense of God's presence in his heart. However, particularly in the central portion of "The Church," he has experienced severe conflicts and has suffered pain and distress on his upward flight to God. Throughout "The Church," he has been keenly aware of his humanity; a consciousness of his sins never leaves him. On occasion, he has actually attained union with God, but not until in the final poem of this section, "Love III," when he has reached the banquet in the New Jerusalem, is his relationship with God constant and permanently satisfying.

In "The Church," one becomes aware of Herbert's interest in his relationship to God. His development of the "union with God" theme is especially noteworthy in this section of The Temple. Many of the individual poems that express the theme have been discussed and it has been observed that Herbert's speaker moves toward spiritual maturity in the sequence of the poems. He is constantly striving, by every

available means, to reach greater spiritual heights. However, he is hindered at every turn by sin and self-will, but he places his faith in the Divine, allowing God to "draw" him toward the heavenly realm. A poetic tension, of course, is created because the lofty aspirations of the soul are in opposition to the natural inclinations of the body. Thus, through a consideration of the soul's spiritual progress, one comes to a better understanding of Herbert's deeply religious meaning in "The Church."

CHAPTER IV

"THE CHURCH MILITANT": THE CHURCH'S PROGRESS TOWARD UNION WITH GOD

Whereas in the poems of "The Church" Herbert describes the progress of the Christian soul toward its union with God in the New Jerusalem, in "The Church Militant," he describes the progress of the church toward a union with her head, Christ, at the end of time. "The Church Militant" is not an account of the soul's conflicts in the temporal realm; rather, it records the journey of the church from her inception until the end of time.[127] Of course, the speaker of "The Church" is a member of the invisible church. Hence, there is a vital link between "The Church" section and "The Church Militant." This link is strengthened, because the "union with God" theme that pervades "Church-porch" and "The Church" is dominant also in "The Church Militant." However, to understand the significance of this long narrative poem in relation to Herbert's theme, one must understand the meaning of the term, Church Militant. Traditionally, this

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[127]Stanley Stewart, "Time and The Temple," SEL, VI (1966), 105.

designation is given to " . . . members of Christ's Church on earth . . . ."[128] The word, militant, of course, means being engaged in warfare or conflict. Therefore, in this poem, the church on earth--the body of Christ--is engaged in a struggle with her archenemy, sin. Throughout the course of human history, sin is constantly trying to hinder the progress of the church in her attempts to reach her ultimate goal of union with God.

Concerning the meaning of the term church, one has already observed that Herbert uses the Hebrew temple as an analogy of the human heart, but he often associates "The Church Militant" with and makes it analogous to the third division of the Hebrew temple, the holy of holies. According to the typological interpretation of the Scriptures, the holy of holies where the ark, a symbol of God's presence, remained was an Old Testament type of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, it seems appropriate that the speaker of Herbert's "Church," after having attained a perfect relationship with Christ in heaven, can now relate the history of the earthly

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[128]Jessie Corrigan, A Practical Catholic Dictionary, p. 65.

church in "The Church Militant." Walker remarks that in "The Church Militant," the soul has attained its lofty objective.[129] Thus, the speaker, who is in heaven with God, describes the movement of the church and sin as if he were seeing through God's eyes.

Perhaps, the analogy between the holy of holies in the literal Hebrew temple and the church on earth should not be carried too far. However, it is abundantly evident that the speaker in "The Church Militant" is relating the church's spiritual progress in history from a heavenly vantage point.[130] This heavenly perspective suggests a traditional view of human history held by most seventeenth-century literary men. According to this view of history, based upon the Bible and theology as well as tradition, Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden alienated the human race from its Creator. Therefore, throughout the course of human history, God has provided some means whereby individuals and groups of people can be reconciled to him. In the Old Testament dispensation of Law, under Moses' leadership, an elaborate sacrificial system, centered in the tabernacle and administered by the

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[129] Walker, op. cit., p. 299.

[130] Ibid., p. 304.

priesthood, was instituted. The purpose of animal sacrifices was primarily to atone for the sins of the people.[131] By means of sacrifices, the followship lost because of the Fall was restored to the Hebrew people. However, God's presence was localized in the ark of the covenant, making it impossible for the individual soul to commune with God without the mediation of a priest, especially called and consecrated to offer sacrifices. According to the typological interpretation of the Bible followed by seventeeth-century churchmen, the Old Testament sacrifices are types of the true sacrifice or Christ, who gave his life as an atonement for sin. His was a perfect sacrifice which made possible individual, personal reconciliation between the human soul and God. For this interpretation of Old Testament symbols, these churchmen followed the example of the New Testament writers who viewed Christ as a fulfillment of Old Testament types.[132]

This view of history is based upon the assumption that God is omniscient and omnipotent, possessing foreknowledge

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[131]Exodus xxv-xxx.

[132]Joseph H. Summers, "Herbert's Form," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 1061.

of every event that has transpired or will transpire in the course of history. Because God is not limited by time, he views history as a great panorama. Therefore, the speaker in "The Church Militant" has God's point of view; he possesses the same knowledge of past, present, and future historical events that God has.[133] According to this concept, God had, from before the creation of the universe, carefully devised a plan for the human race and, in particular, for the church. Bloomfield explains that according to the world view that Herbert and his contemporaries held, God is divine, but, at the same time, he is active in the affairs of human history. They believed that God directs history according to a benevolent plan, formulated before the creation of the world.[134] Miner further elaborates on the world view depicted in "The Church Militant," noting that a characteristic of many seventeenth-century writers was their concern with future events--those connected with the end of the world and the Judgment.[135] It naturally follows, then, that God's plan for human history is orderly and

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[133]Walker, op. cit., p. 298.

[134]Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 83.

[135]Miner, op. cit., p. 51.

benevolent. Throughout "The Church Militant," this world view is evident. Herbert is presenting the idea of movement toward the Day of Judgment, using the sun image to show the progress of the church through time. Each forward movement brings the church nearer to the place of judgment--the New Jerusalem, where the church will be united with Christ, her head.

Herbert's world view clearly coincides with the Scriptural view, emphasizing the fall, redemption, and reconciliation cycle. This cycle, in turn, may be applied to the church as a whole as well as to the individual within the church. Thus, "The Church Militant" may be understood, on one level, in relation to this cycle.[136] On another, it may be viewed literally as an account of the church's history from its earliest beginnings in Old Testament times to its reunion with Christ on the Day of Judgment. Thus, when Herbert uses the terms, church or religion, in "The Church Militant," he may have reference to the visible church (the human institution called the Christian church), or he may infer the invisible church (the body of Christ). George notes that, in the seventeenth century, a distinction was

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[136]Carnes, op. cit., p. 524.

generally made between the visible and the invisible church. Only those individuals who are elected to receive eternal life are members of the invisible church. This body of true believers exists within the visible or institutional church on earth.[137] Further, he comments, "The invisible church is the real vitality, the essential soul of the visible church."[138] The members of this invisible body are those who will be united with Christ at the Judgment.

"The Church Militant" is divided into five sections, each closing with a refrain, "How dear to me, O God, thy counsels are! / Who may with thee compare?" (47-48). In this refrain, the poet periodically affirms his faith in God's greatness and foreknowledge. In the first section of the poem, the speaker addresses God and rehearses the progress of religion from its inception in the East, beginning in Noah's time and continuing until she moves westward into ancient Greece. In the opening lines of "The Church Militant," one is immediately aware of the poet's concept of God's plan for the human race and also for his church. The speaker informs the reader that nations " . . . wrap

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[137]George, op. cit., p. 315.

[138]Ibid., p. 313.

their policies in thy [God's] decree" (6). Thus, the events of history bring human institutions into compliance with God's will, or his divine plan. In particular, the speaker believes that God is concerned about the progress of his "Church and Spouse" (9). The word, Spouse, used in this context, may refer to the "elect"--that special group of people predestined to receive eternal life, often referred to as the bride of Christ. In tracing the history of the Hebrew religion, the predecessor of the Christian religion, the speaker states, "Early didst thou [God] arise to plant this vine [religion]" (11). In accordance with traditional Biblical exegesis, Christ not only established the New Testament church, but he was active with God the Father in the Creation and in the history of the Old Testament. Thus, the poet can link the Old and New Testaments, likening religion (the church) to "Noahs shadie vine" (15). The vine may represent Christ and his church since St. John, in his gospel, writes that Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye [his followers] are the branches . . . ."[139] The branches, then, represent individuals joined to Christ, their source of spiritual life.

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[139]John xv.5.

After its inception in the East, according to the poem's speaker, religion moved westward as the sun moves westward in its orbit. Sunne may be a play on the word, son, with regard to the Son of God because, in the New Testament, Jesus is often associated with the light image.[140] This observation is particularly significant in connection with the speaker's following statement about the church's movement: "The course was westward, that the sunne might light / As well our understanding as our sight" (17-18). Thus, Christ enlightens the human heart and mind.

Returning his attention to the progress of religion in ancient times, the poet, in a few lines, traces her journey through the vast expanse of Old Testament history, noting only key leaders of the Hebrew people such as Abraham, Moses, and Solomon. Then, he proceeds to the New Testament to consider the church that Christ instituted. In this connection, it should be noted that, beginning with Moses, the ark of the covenant, representing God's presence with the Hebrews as a nation, was placed in the holy of holies, the most sacred room of the tabernacle.[141] The ark was the visible evidence

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[140]John i.7.

[141]Exodus xxxvii.1.

of a spiritual relationship between God and his chosen people, the Hebrews. It was the means whereby the nation as a whole could attain to a limited sense of God's presence with them.

The ark, according to typology, was a symbol of Christ. Therefore, to show that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament type and ushered in the new covenant of grace, the poet relates an important event that accompanied Christ's death on the cross. Specifically, at the time of Christ's death, an earthquake occurred and, as a consequence, the thick curtain separating the holy of holies (where the ark of the covenant was enshrined) from the holy place was torn from top to bottom.[142] Since Solomon's time, this curtain had separated everyone except the high priest, who entered the holy of holies once a year to perform the ritual of atonement for the sins of the people, from God's presence.[143] With Christ's death, the barrier was removed, signifying that all men could approach God without a human mediator, a priest. According to Protestant theology, Christ had become not only the sacrifice for sins, but the high priest, the mediator between God and man. In this connection, St. Paul writes, " . . . there is one God, and

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[142]Matthew xxvii.51.

[143]Leviticus xvi.

one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."[144] Thus, Christ's death and all that his passion signifies replaces the ark of the covenant, and the cross becomes a symbol of the New Testament covenant of grace. No longer is God's presence confined to the holy of holies in Solomon's temple. God desires to dwell in the temple of the human heart.[145]

This new covenant of grace ushers in a new era for religion. Herbert writes that " . . . now with the crosse as with a staffe alone, / Religion, like a pilgrime, westward bent" (28-29). In the meantime, the light of the gospel also reaches Egypt, where it has good success, but its forward thrust is into the great Grecian civilization. The speaker recounts the overwhelming victories of the church in Greece: " . . . arts / Gave her [the church] highest place in all men's hearts" (49-50). Carnes believes that by linking the arts with religion, the idea of man's desire to find peace with God is expressed.[146] The phenomenal success of the church in Greece is indicated in these

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[144]I Timothy ii.5.

[145]II Corinthians vi.16.

[146]Carnes, op. cit., p. 521.

lines: "Learning was pos'd, Philosophie was set, / Sophisters taken in the fishers net" (52-53). The influence of the new religion was strong enough to attract even the intellectuals in Greece. In Rome, as in Greece, Christianity was heartily received. The poet states, "The Warrier his deere skarres no more resounds, / But seems to yeeld Christ hath the greater wounds" (63-64). This particular convert is representative of many others who embraced Christianity. To this point in "The Church Militant," the poet has given most of his attention to the overwhelming victories of the church. However, he notes that, in the Roman Empire, when religion and government became fused and the political situation degenerated, religion also declined. After this decline of religious fervor, the church, according to God's plan moved westward to Germany where she flourished in the form of the Protestant Reformation. Her message, then, was carried to England and other nearby nations where it was also accepted wholeheartedly.

In the third division of the poem, the speaker reverts in history to ancient times to describe the westward advancement of sin, the enemy of the church. He says,

> Much about one and the same time and place,
> Both where and when the Church began her race
> Sinne did set out of Eastern Babylon.
> (10-12)

Almost immediately, the reader senses the bitter conflict that will ensue between the church and her enemy, a struggle that continues to the conclusion of the poem. The speaker describes sin's activities in ancient Egypt where he first attempts to hinder the church's work. In Egypt, sin manifests himself in nature worship for the purpose of destroying faith in the God of heaven. The poet says,

> At first he [Sin] got to Egypt and did sow
> Gardens of gods, which ev'ry yeare did grow
> Fresh and fine deities.
>
> (107-109)

By turning to the worship of the creation in preference to the worship of God, the poet implies that the Egyptians divorced themselves from a communion with God. The speaker states, "Who makes a root his god, how low is he, / If God and man be sever'd infinitely!" (115-116). Thus, as in "The Church," sin and disobedience separate the soul from God, so in "The Church Militant," sin succeeds in separating a nation from God.

In similar fashion, sin, symbolized by darkness, undermines the influence of the church, moving westward into Greece and then into the Roman Empire. Therefore, in the fourth section of the poem, the poet graphically presents the bitter conflicts between the church and sin as sin

pursues the church. In Greece, sin employs the pagan religious traditions to destroy the influence of the church. The speaker states that sin was so successful in his deceit that " . . . the world came in with hands and purses full / To this great lotterie and all would pull" (133-134).

Sin found it extremely difficult to dislodge Christianity from her position of esteem and influence in the Roman Empire, for the new religion had been successful in its conquest of pagan Rome. Therefore, sin decides to use different tactics from those employed in Egypt and Greece and disguises himself as a churchman (a pope) in order to accomplish his sinister mission. Accordingly, as a false priest of God, sin makes " . . . a jest of Christs three offices" (174). Not only does this false priest attempt to counterfeit Christ's ministry; he incorporates pagan philosophies and religious practices from Egypt, Greece, and ancient Rome into the church's dogma and ritual. Of course, this admixture of elements weakened the spiritual fiber of the Christian church. The overwhelming victories that the church had enjoyed in the era just following the New Testament period and continuing through several generations cannot be overlooked, but the internal damage done by sin was devastating to the church's spiritual life and vitality. However,

she was not utterly defeated. Thus, at the end of this fourth section, the poet repeats the refrain, reaffirming God's greatness and his concern for the progress of his church.

The hope of the church throughout "The Church Militant" is, of course, in her constant westward movement in accordance with the foreknowledge of God. Therefore, in the last section of the poem, after being severely weakened and almost defeated in Rome, the church experiences a resurgence of spiritual vigor through the Protestant Reformation in Germany and England and in other European countries. Concerning this phase of the church's history, the speaker comments,

> The latter church [Protestant] is to the first a debter
> . . . . . .
> The late reformation never durst
> Compare with ancient times and purer years.
> (224; 226-227)

In other words, the losses suffered during the Roman period of the church's history can never be fully regained. However, the church moves steadily forward, though still "hounded" by sin. When it reaches the American continent, the speaker observes, "Yet as the Church shall thither westward flie, / So Sinne shall trace and dog her instantly"

(259-260). But God's providence dictates that the countries of the western hemisphere " . . . have their period also and set times / Both for their vertuous actions and their crimes" (261-262). These nations must be allowed the opportunity to be reconciled to God through entry into the church, but religion, there, will be hindered by sin as it has been hindered elsewhere. As the church nears the end of her cyclic journey around the earth, her ranks are nearly depleted, and her spiritual strength is weakened by constant struggles with her enemy, sin.

Throughout "The Church Militant," Herbert uses light as a symbol of Christ and darkness as a symbol of sin. In the closing lines of the poem, he expands his light image. In depicting the final phase of the journey of the church, he states, "Thus do both lights, as well as Church as Sunne, / Light one another and together runne" (270-271). In this passage, Christ is equated with the sun, and the church is likened to the moon. Of course, his body, the church, depends upon him for her light, and as the two bodies of light converge, they become one. Similarly, the poet links sin and darkness. Therefore, concerning the final portion of sin's journey toward his judgment in the East, the poet writes, "Thus also Sinne and Darkness follow

still / The Church and Sunne with all their power and skill" (272-273). Although Endicott views "The Church Militant" as Herbert's account of the decline of the church,[147] the church is not destroyed by her enemy. Throughout the course of history, her movements have been " . . . perfectly guided, their ends known and ordained by an omniscient, omnipotent creator."[148] Therefore, in God's providence, the church is, at the end of her earthly journey, brought back to God.

The poet writes that, when church and sin reach their original starting point in the East, judgment awaits them. Miner, in an effort to explain the seventeenth-century concept of the end of the world, remarks that when the Day of Judgment comes, time will cease and eternity will begin. This timeless state will be characterized by either joy or damnation.[149] Without launching a detailed discussion of the theological aspects of the Day of Judgment and the end of the world, one should note, here, that the judgment of

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[147]Endicott, op. cit., p. 236.

[148]Stanley Stewart, "Time and The Temple," SEL, VI (1966), 108.

[149]Miner, op. cit., p. 50.

the church and its individual members is probably not identical to the judgment that awaits sin. According to St. John's prophecy of future events recorded in the book of Revelation, Christ will return to the earth and establish his kingdom in Jerusalem.[150] His capital, then, is referred to as the New Jerusalem, and from his throne in that city, he will pronounce judgment upon sin. Perhaps, Herbert had in mind the punishment of sin, as personified in the city of Babylon. According to this concept, the Judgment is a fearful occasion. Thus, St. John describes Babylon's fate: " . . . alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come."[151] In the Biblical text, Babylon is always associated with sin and corruption, and, at the Judgment, her punishment will be meted out. However, the judgment of the church is not for the purpose of meting out punishment. Rather, the church, at the end of her earthly journey, will be rewarded for her faithfulness. St. Paul writes, "For we [Christians; members of Christ's church] must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that

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[150]Revelation xxi.

[151]Revelation xxiii.10.

every one may receive the things done in his body."[152] Thus, Christ will reward each individual Christian in proportion to his devotion and in accordance with his actions. Then, all members of the church, as a whole, will be united with Christ, the head of the church, in the New Jerusalem.

"The Church Militant," since it deals with the church as a whole and not primarily with individual souls, " . . . is an apocalyptic poem; its tone is detached and austere . . . ."[153] Thus, according to God's plan, the church, as a body, "planted" in the East in ancient times, has moved steadily forward through the course of human history, just as the speaker in "The Church" progressed through his earthly life. The church has constantly been hindered and deceived by sin, her enemy. Her struggles remind one of the conflicts and struggles with sin endured by the speaker in "The Church" as he tried to rise above the temptations of the world and attain to a union with God. However, as surely as the sun moves westward in its orbit according to a pre-determined course, the invisible church, directed by Christ,

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[152] II Corinthians iv.11.

[153] Stanley Stewart, "Time and The Temple," SEL, VI (1966), 108.

her head, moves in a predetermined course until her journey is completed and she is reunited with him.

Even though Herbert uses the framework of history in "The Church Militant," his primary concern is actually the " . . . coming of righteousness on earth."[154] Thus, each soul within the church progresses toward a perfect union with God, while at the same time, the entire church similarly moves forward toward a union with Christ in the New Jerusalem.

The parallels between the soul's journey through life and the church's journey through the course of history show that "The Church" and "The Church Militant" are, indeed, closely related because the theme, union with God, pervades both sections of The Temple. In "The Church," the theme is expressed as the soul's struggle and progress toward a perfect union with God. Then, in "The Church Militant," the theme is evidenced in the forward movement of the church toward reunion with Christ.

The foregoing discussion of "The Church Militant" completes the examination of Herbert's dominant theme, union

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[154]Palmer, op. cit., II, 352.

with God, which pervades The Temple. It has been noted that the speaker of "The Church Militant" has reached the heavenly realm. Thus, from this vantage point, he relates the progress of the church throughout the course of human history. The poem is organized with the fall, redemption, and reconciliation cycle in mind. The cycle is applied to the individual soul in "Church-porch" and in "The Church," but, in "The Church Militant," it is associated with the collective body of Christians. Thus, the successes and struggles of the individual soul in his quest for spiritual union with God is extended to include the entire church. Thus, one views the church as she moves forward toward a reunion with Christ, her head, at the Judgment.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

George Herbert's The Temple is an interesting, but complex, collection of religious poems. Many of the individual poems in "The Church" are praised for their lyric beauty and their literary excellence. However, in an effort to "unlock," at least to some extent, the meaning of the collection as a whole, the poet's development of a dominant theme, union with God, has been examined. It has been observed that Herbert's religious beliefs and his personal devotion to his God greatly influenced the form and content of The Temple. The Reverend Robert Aris Willmott, in the introduction to an 1864 edition of Herbert's works, remarked:

> Herbert is preëminently a poet of the church: his similies are drawn from her ceremonies; his most solemn thoughts are born of her mysteries . . . .[155]

Therefore, although many approaches might be taken to Herbert's works, it seems logical to consider his poetry in its religious context if the true meaning is to be discovered. Consequently, an acquaintance with the religious thought of

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[155]George Herbert, The Works of George Herbert, I, xxvi.

the seventeenth-century provides important insights into the complex meaning of The Temple. The role of the Bible in English life and its relationship to the literature of the period has been discussed.

In particular, the dominant poetic theme has been examined in connection with the traditional typological interpretation of the Scriptures which was espoused by most seventeenth-century churchmen, including Herbert. Throughout The Temple, he freely uses Old Testament types and symbols to reveal New Testament truths concerning the church as a body and the individual Christian within the church. Tuve notes that the meaning of Herbert's poetry becomes clearer when one recognizes that Old Testament symbols and images are fulfilled in the New Testament.[156] If one is aware that Herbert is employing the three divisions of the literal Hebrew temple in a symbolic sense to denote both the human heart and the invisible church, his understanding of The Temple as a whole is greatly expanded. The relationship between the three sections of the collection, "Church-porch," "The Church," and "The Church Militant," becomes

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[156]Rosemond Tuve, A Reading of George Herbert, p. 79.

evident.[157] Also, if the significance of the analogous relationship between the temple and the human heart with regard to its striving for union with God is understood, one begins to comprehend Herbert's purpose for "Church-porch" in relation to the dominant theme. Also, the appropriateness of its position at the beginning of The Temple becomes evident.

Similarly, if one knows that the doctrines of the Early Church were highly revered by seventeenth-century churchmen and laymen,[158] the poems in "The Church" take on added meaning. For instance, the New Testament writers advocated a devout, disciplined life such as Herbert describes in many of his poems. In this connection, Warren observes that, to Herbert, "Religion is, in essence, the reduction to order of the human will. The mark of that effected order is peace."[159] Thus, Herbert's development of his theme, union with God, bears out this basic assumption, because the speaker in "The Church" constantly strives to bring his will into conformity with God's will in order to be reconciled

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[157]Hanley, op. cit., p. 121.

[158]Gilbert, op. cit., p. 235.

[159]Warren, op. cit., p. 30.

with God. In this same connection, Dalglish notes that Herbert emphasizes the importance of a vital communion between the human and the Divine.[160] Consequently, one sees that Herbert depicts the conflicts of the human soul in its effort to reach God. These prominent characteristics lead Eliot to conclude that "The Church" is a well-ordered collection of poems describing the vacillation of the human heart and the process of spiritual maturity that culminates in quiet confidence.[161]

Without an understanding of the religious background of the seventeenth century and Herbert's personal convictions, one may think "The Church Militant" merely an oversimplified account of church history. Thus, the meaning and significance of this long, narrative poem that concludes The Temple would be overlooked or its literary value underestimated. However, if the traditional theological concept of the Christian church is taken into consideration, Herbert's purpose for the poem and its position following "The Church" become clear. Instead of viewing "The Church Militant" as

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[160]Jack Dalglish, Eight Metaphysical Poets, p. 141.

[161]T. S. Eliot, George Herbert: Writers and Their Work, p. 23.

an appendix of little importance, as Martz and Palmer[162] do, it becomes " . . . the appropriate denouement of the larger poetic whole."[163] If "The Church Militant" is analogous to the third division of the Hebrew temple, its position at the conclusion of the collection is justified. Its speaker has progressed through the Christian life and has attained union with God in heaven. Therefore, from his vantage point in heaven, he can, in retrospect and through the omniscience of God, view the progress of the church throughout the course of human history as it moves steadily toward union with God at the Judgment. Furthermore, it is noted that the dominant theme pervades this section of The Temple as it pervades the other two sections.

Herbert, in his poetry, depicts a universe that operates in an orderly, harmonious manner.[164] Thus, it follows that he probably divided The Temple into its three divisions for the purpose of forming a structurally unified body of poetry, although, as Martz contends, the unity of

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[162]Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 289; Palmer, op. cit., III, 349.

[163]Stanley Stewart, "Time and The Temple," SEL, VI (1966), 110.

[164]Ostriker, op. cit., p. 65.

the collection is "deeper and richer" than any structural order.[165] Its unity derives, to a significant extent, from Herbert's logical development of the dominant poetic theme, union with God, that pervades each of the sections of The Temple.

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[165]Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 296.

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