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HERBERT'S HOUSEHOLD IMAGERY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
CHAPTER I: GEORGE HERBERT, SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GENTLEMAN	5
CHAPTER II: GEORGE HERBERT, ARTIST AND CRAFTSMAN	16
CHAPTER III: THE HOUSEHOLD IMAGERY	29
The House Imagery	32
The Furniture Imagery	55
The Food Imagery	63
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

INTRODUCTION

The apparent simplicity of George Herbert's poetry has caused much comment and much misunderstanding of both the man and his poetry. The popular nineteenth-century picture of Herbert as the simple, tranquil country priest is being discarded, however, as twentieth-century scholars of metaphysical poetry re-examine both the works and life of George Herbert and find little simple about his life and a magnificent craftsmanship in his poetry. Both the simplicity and the depth of Herbert's poetry lie in his imagery, in which concrete everyday objects and actions become high abstractions usually difficult to express. Of course, the presentation of abstractions through the common and concrete is a trait of metaphysical poetry in general, but no other metaphysical poet uses both fairly common expression and downright homely imagery as effectively as Herbert. Donne and most of the later metaphysical poets achieved the metaphysical bond by startling contrasts of the ridiculous with the sublime, as in Donne's "The Flea," or wittily constructed conceits like the famous "stiff twin compasses" of Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning." Herbert's household imagery could not serve in Donne's kind of poetry. It is distinctively Herbert's, the expression of a quieter

man than Donne, but a man no less complex and no less an artist than the famous Dean of Saint Paul's.

It is this seemingly ordinary day-to-day imagery that this paper intends to explore, in order to reveal how Herbert achieved his apparent simplicity of imagery, to what effect he used the household imagery, and for what reasons he used it. By "household imagery" I mean Herbert's poetic use of concrete objects and actions commonly associated with everyday domestic life. If Herbert had been a simple country parson who wrote poetry as a genteel pastime, the household imagery probably would have been as simple and as quaint as many critics have said and would probably not be worth a second reading. However, since Herbert was born into a great and noble family, received the best education available, and spent several years in the English Court, the "simple" imagery is a matter of choice, not necessity. Attempting to explain both why Herbert chose his plain style over the eloquent style which he knew well and how he used his keen wit and great knowledge in plain poetry, the first part of this paper gives a view of Herbert as a man and as an artist in his times. The second part of the paper is directly concerned with the household imagery, its meanings and effects.

I do not mean to imply that Herbert's sole uniqueness as a poet is the result of his household imagery. Herbert's use of speech rhythms, his concern with and control of form,

his knowledge and love of music, his classical education, and his individual relationship with God and the Church are all important elements in his poetry. Marchette Chute's biography of Herbert in her Two Gentle Men¹ touches on all these aspects of Herbert's life and work, and Joseph H. Summers' George Herbert, His Religion and Art² is a competent and well-researched study of Herbert's craftsmanship in relation to his religion and life. The most exhaustive study of Herbert's poetry so far is Mary Ellen Rickey's recently published Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert.³ As her title indicates, Miss Rickey explodes the simplicity myths that long have obscured Herbert's poetry for scholars as well as casual readers.

This paper was entirely planned and partially written before Miss Rickey's study of Herbert was published. Some of my discoveries parallel hers, but where she discusses at length a point I only touch on, I refer the reader to her fuller discussion, and where I draw on her ideas to supplement mine, in general substance or in detail, I note the extent of my indebtedness to her. I have one major

¹Marchette Chute, Two Gentle Men (New York, 1959).

²Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, His Religion and Art (Cambridge, Mass., 1954).

³Mary Ellen Rickey, Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert (Lexington, Ky., 1966).

objection to Miss Rickey's treatment of Herbert. She assumes, without actually stating it, that Herbert was fully intellectually conscious of all the rich meanings and possible allusions he invested in his poems. I tend to agree, instead, with William Empson, who suggests that the ambiguities radiated by a poem, although they may become quite clear to the consciousness of a precise critic, are not always in the mind of the poet as he records them.⁴

⁴William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, third edition, revised (New York, [n. d.]).

CHAPTER I

GEORGE HERBERT, SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GENTLEMAN

Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
 The way that takes the town;
 Thou didst betray me to a lingring book,
 And wrap me in a gown.
 I was entangled in the world of strife,
 Before I had the power to change my life.
 ("Affliction (I)," ll. 37-42.)¹

In 1593, when Shakespeare was writing Venus and Adonis, when Marlowe died, when Sidney, Spenser, Lodge, and the other fluent Elizabethan writers were at their prime, and when John Donne was twenty and had just begun to write, George Herbert was born. The Herberts of Montgomeryshire, Wales, were a powerful and prominent branch of a family established in Wales and England from the time of William the Conqueror. George Herbert was the fifth son of Richard Herbert, hereditary governor of Montgomery Castle, and Magdalen Herbert, the daughter of Sir Richard Newport of Shropshire, whose family equalled the Herberts in importance. Since Richard Herbert died when George was only three, the responsibility of the boy's upbringing fell to his mother, an exceptionally capable and charming woman.

¹George Herbert, The Works, ed. F. B. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941), p. 47. All quotations from Herbert's poetry in this paper are from Hutchinson's edition.

Marchette Chute says that Magdalen Herbert had "an uncommon amount of wit and intelligence, and enough efficiency to rule half Wales."² She ruled her household well, keeping careful watch and firm control over all ten of her children, and she was one of the great ladies of her day. John Donne called Magdalen Herbert's house "a court in the conversation of the best."³ It was to her that Donne wrote his famous "The Autumnall," which begins: "No Spring, nor Summer Beauty hath such grace,/ As I have seen in one Autumnall face."⁴ And to "her as their most suitable recipient,"⁵ Donne sent the Holy Sonnets when he had completed them. A firm woman of spiritual as well as physical beauty, Magdalen was a fine mother for George Herbert.

Herbert was tutored at home until he was about twelve years old, at which time Magdalen had him enrolled in Westminster School near her house in Charing Cross. He was a day student until he won a scholarship and became one of the forty King's Scholars who boarded at the school and were either at their studies or at prayer every day from five in the morning until eight at night. Westminster

²P. 16.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴John Donne, The Poems, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford, 1912), I, 92. All quotations from Donne's poetry in this paper are from Grierson's edition.

⁵Chute, p. 25.

School had a fine reputation for classical scholarship, and Herbert excelled in both Latin and Greek. Like other young scholars of his time, he had to write Latin verse and to learn and practice all the intricate devices of Latin rhetoric. Two hours of the week were devoted to the study and practice of music, which was to be one of Herbert's lifelong avocations.⁶

From Westminster School, Herbert went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he continued the rigorous course of classical scholarship proper for a young gentleman of his time. Trinity College, like Westminster School, was rigidly Anglican, and Herbert continued to go to prayers at five each morning and to pass the rest of the day studying, reading the Bible, and praying. He took his B.A. degree in 1613, and in 1616 he "became a master of arts and a major fellow of Trinity College, with the right to a servant of his own and a seat on the dias at meal-time."⁷ As a fellow of the College, Herbert became a tutor and began to advance rapidly in the University. He was appointed Trinity College lecturer in Greek grammar in 1617, and during the next year he was made Reader in Rhetoric for the whole University. Herbert's duty as

⁶Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁷Ibid., p. 50.

Reader in Rhetoric was to lecture in English on classical authors "for the special benefit of first year students."⁸

For ten years Herbert had been at Cambridge and had excelled as a student and as a lecturer, but he had not moved out of the narrow world of strict university life in all that time. In October of 1619, however, the very important University post of Public Orator was left open. Herbert called the Oratorship "the finest place in the University,"⁹ and certainly it carried great opportunity for worldly recognition and advancement.¹⁰ Miss Chute says the Orator was the seventeenth-century equivalent of the twentieth-century public relations man,¹¹ and Herbert described the duties of the Orator as writing all official University letters and making "all the Orations, be it to King, Prince, or whatever comes to the University."¹² The Orator also had an important place at the many impressive ceremonies of the University.

Although Herbert, as a Fellow of Trinity College, was supposedly obligated to take Holy Orders within seven

⁸Hutchinson, p. xxvii.

⁹Letter to Sir John Danvers, Ibid., p. 369.

¹⁰Both Herbert's predecessors in the post, Sir Francis Nethersole and Sir Robert Naunton, had graduated from the Oratorship to become Secretaries of State (Hutchinson, p. xxviii).

¹¹p. 57

¹²Letter to Danvers, Hutchinson, p. 369.

years of accepting the fellowship or give up the fellowship, he campaigned actively to obtain the Oratorship, an obviously secular position, rationalizing that the salary from the office would enable him to afford more divinity books and "that this dignity, hath no such earthiness in it, but it may very well be joined with Heaven; or if it had to others, yet to me it should not."¹³

He was elected Orator on January 21, 1620, and his first official letter was to King James in thanks for a copy of James's own Opera Latina.¹⁴ Charming and carefully Herbert flattered the King with overstated but pleasing compliments, and this first letter and following letters and orations won for the Orator, as well as for Cambridge, the favor of the pedantic old monarch.

Herbert held the Oratorship until 1627, but after the first few years he seems to have been inactive in the post and to have been spending most of his time with James's court. Herbert's previous major ambition, to serve God as a minister of the Anglican Church, changed as he became attached to the court and "found himself once more in the easy aristocratic, civilized atmosphere in which Magdalen Herbert had reared her sons."¹⁵ With influential courtiers and the King himself as friends, Herbert seemed well on

¹³Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁴The letter, "Ad Iacobum Regem," appears in Hutchinson, pp. 438-39.

¹⁵Chute, p. 81.

the way to an important political career; he served as Montgomeryshire representative in the House of Commons in the Parliaments of 1624 and 1625. In March of 1625, however, King James died, and Herbert's political aspirations seem to have died with him. Charles I was far different from his peace-loving, pedantic father, and Herbert, who had agreed with James's policies and had liked James personally, disagreed with Charles and had little in common with him. A man of integrity, Herbert could not continue his court career after Charles took the throne.

Herbert left the court and, in 1626, was ordained a deacon, finally fulfilling the ambition he had laid aside to accept the Cambridge Oratorship, his ambition to take Holy Orders and to serve God as a man of the Church. Until 1630 Herbert held only sinecures in the Church, but that spring he accepted a rectory of his own and was admitted to the Order of Priesthood on September 19, 1630. Herbert had married Jane Danvers, a cousin of his stepfather, in 1629, and they went together to Bemerton, a small country parish out of the way of seventeenth-century fashion and convenience. At Bemerton Herbert was to live and preach for the rest of his life.

From childhood Herbert had been plagued by ill health. Before he went up to Cambridge, the Headmaster of Westminster School warned him "to study moderately, and use exercise; [his] parts being so good, that if [he] were careful not to

impair [his] health with too much study, [he] would not fail to arrive at the top of learning in any Art or Science."¹⁶ Herbert seems to have ignored this kind advice, though, because he was ill soon after entering Trinity and was never again free from periods of illness. But Herbert was not a man who, to pamper his body, could cease the activities his conscience demanded of him. He strove to be as healthy as possible, but his concern with physical health was the concern of one who saw the body as the dwelling place of the soul, as a temple that must be fit habitation for the Holy Spirit. The parson "keeps his body tame, serviceable, and healthfull; and his soul fervent, active, young, and lusty as an eagle,"¹⁷ Herbert wrote in The Country Parson.

Herbert's health, which had been particularly bad during the period between his leaving the court and his marriage, improved greatly after he married, but for less than three years was his body serviceable and healthful enough for him to carry the duties of a country parson. In the winter of 1632-33 he became too ill to preach his sermons. On March 1, 1633, two days before he would have been forty, George Herbert died of consumption. "I am now ready to die," he said, and "went quietly, without any apparent disturbance."¹⁸

¹⁶Hutchinson, p. xxv.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁸Chute, p. 147.

None of Herbert's English poetry was printed in his lifetime, but shortly before he died Herbert sent to his friend Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding the manuscript of The Temple, with directions for Ferrar to burn the poems if they would not be of help to others' souls.¹⁹ Ferrar sent The Temple for publication to Thomas Buck, the Cambridge University printer who had been a Fellow of the University at the same time as Herbert. Ferrar and Buck seem to have taken the greatest of care to see that the book was printed as Herbert had written it,²⁰ and the first two editions of The Temple were printed the same year that Herbert died. The poems were immediately successful and remained popular throughout the seventeenth century, going through eleven editions between 1633 and 1695.

Other seventeenth-century poets as well as the reading public recognized and admired Herbert's talent. Christopher Harvey's The Synagogue, or The Shadow of the Temple . . . in imitation of Mr. George Herbert, was published in 1640, Crashaw entitled his first volume of English religious poetry, published in 1646, Steps to the Temple. Henry Vaughan thought of himself as a disciple of Herbert and evidently knew The Temple almost by heart; "there is no example in English literature of one poet adopting another

¹⁹Summers, p. 84.

²⁰See Chute, pp. 150-151.

poet's words so extensively."²¹ The Temple was used in the religious controversies of the time by strict Anglicans, but was also read and appreciated by Puritans. Prominent musicians, including Purcell, set Herbert's poems to music, and two of the poems, "Antiphon (I)" and "The Elixir," are in the Anglican hymnal today.

The Temple did not fare so well in the eighteenth century. Literary men of the age, professing precision--reason over emotion, clarity over ambiguity--looked on Herbert as a "quaint poet" and a practitioner of false wit and spoke of his poems as examples of vulgar and contrived writing.²² William Cowper admitted enjoying Herbert's poems, "gothic and uncouth as they were,"²³ but generally any praise Herbert received in the Age of Reason was for his piety rather than for his art.

Many new editions of The Temple, both scholarly and popular, appeared in the nineteenth century after Coleridge rediscovered Herbert, but most critics still apologized for Herbert's "quaintness" and for his conceits.²⁴ In the twentieth-century resurgence of metaphysical poetry, Herbert's reputation suffered a new blow, not because his work was ignored but because it seemed rather simple and

²¹Hutchinson, p. xlii.

²²See Dryden's MacFlecknoe, ll. 203-210; Addison's The Spectator, No. 58, May 7, 1711.

²³Hutchinson, p. xlvii.

²⁴Ibid., p. xlix.

unadorned in comparison with the glittering complexity so obvious in the poetry of Donne. Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson's 1912 edition of Donne's poems more or less began the metaphysical resurgence. Grierson also published the influential anthology, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler, and, in his enthusiasm over Donne, Grierson saw Herbert only in comparison with Donne and seems to have read Herbert's poetry only superficially, damning it with faint praise:

It was from Donne that Herbert learned the "metaphysical manner. He has none of Donne's daring applications of scholastic doctrines It is at rare moments that feeling and natural image are imaginatively and completely merged If not greatly imaginative, Herbert is a sincere and sensitive poet"²⁵

Alfred Alvarez, Joan Bennett, and George Williamson²⁶ are other widely read critics who take the same damaging view of Herbert and his works. But Herbert was not trying to be a Donne; he is his own poet and must be seen as such, not only to be appreciated but to be understood. T. S. Eliot's genuine and influential appreciation of Herbert²⁷ was one

²⁵Herbert J. C. Grierson, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler (Oxford, 1921), pp. xlii and xliii-xliv.

²⁶Alfred Alvarez, The School of Donne (New York, 1961); Joan Bennett, Four Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge, 1953); George Williamson, The Donne Tradition (Cambridge, Mass., 1930).

²⁷See Eliot's "George Herbert" in Spectator, CXLVIII (1932), 360-61, and his pamphlet, George Herbert (London, 1962).

of the first antidotes to the opinion fostered by Grierson's comments. Hutchinson's 1941 edition of Herbert's Works treats Herbert with the respect and scholarship he deserves, and since 1950 many new books and articles, including the studies by Miss Chute, Rosamond Tuve,²⁸ Summers, and, probably most important, Miss Rickey, which approach Herbert as a major poet on his own merit, have been published.

²⁸Rosamond Tuve, A Reading of George Herbert (Chicago, 1952).

CHAPTER II

GEORGE HERBERT, ARTIST AND CRAFTSMAN

He condescends even to the knowledge of tillage, and pastorage, and makes great use of them in teaching, because people by what they understand, are best led to what they understand not.
 (The Country Parson.)¹

George Herbert's first sermon at Bemerton was full of the seventeenth-century rhetorical eloquence he had used so well as Cambridge Orator, but that was the only such sermon he ever preached there.² He was at Bemerton in the service of God, as God's servant to the people of the parish, and as long as he was preaching above their heads he was not serving them or God through his sermons. Herbert is careful to note that the country parson "is not witty, or learned, or eloquent, but Holy."³ Herbert's duty as a religious poet, according to Joseph Summers, was "to perceive and to communicate God's form,"⁴ and certainly he had the same duty as a minister. Because individual perception is colored by individual experience, Herbert's

¹Hutchinson, p. 228.

²Chute, p. 126.

³The Country Parson, Hutchinson, p. 233.

⁴p. 93.

perceptions, coming through a mind trained in the classics and used to the complicated wit of good seventeenth-century society, were more varied and complex than those of his poor, rural parishioners. This fuller perception gave Herbert both more understanding and knowledge to offer his parishioners and the problem of translating his own insights and reasoning into their simpler language. In The Country Parson Herbert said that "there is no knowledg, but, in a skilful hand, serves either positively as it is or to illustrate some other knowledge."⁵ By his skill with words Herbert transmuted his classical and worldly learning to lead his congregation by what they understood to what they understood not, and he used the same skill in his poetry, presenting his great store of knowledge and religious experience under usually deceptively simple and easily comprehensible surfaces. He had the artist's ability to select and arrange the materials with which he worked so that the parts merged into a smooth, clear whole that communicated his perceptions.

Careful selection and arrangement were more to Herbert than helpful artistic precepts; they were divine guides. As God's creation was orderly, so must be man's temporal creations and his life. God created order out of chaos, and, without order, Herbert writes, "Nothing performs the

⁵Hutchinson, p. 228.

task of life:/ The elements are let loose to fight"
 ("Affliction (IV)," 11. 16-17).⁶ Seventeenth-century
 thought was still permeated by the idea of the Great Chain
 of Being, the unshakeable order in which God formed the
 universe. Shakespeare put this Chain of Being idea into
 Ulysses' famous lines in Troilus and Cressida:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
 Observe degree, priority, and place,
 Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
 Office, and custom, in all line of order;
 (I.iii.85-88)⁷

and although Shakespeare was stating a seventeenth-century
 belief, the germ of the idea is at least as old as classical
 Greece, where nature was believed to be orderly and bal-
 anced.

Herbert saw God manifested in natural order: "By God's
 governing power he preserves and orders the references of
 things one to the other;" or He may withhold the divine
 gift of order, in which case "the fairest harvests come to
 nothing."⁸ But, Herbert explains, God withholds divine
 order only so "that men should perpetuate, and not break
 off their acts of dependance, how faire soever the oppor-
 tunities present themselves."⁹ God's withholding of order,

⁶p. 90.

⁷William Shakespeare, The Complete Plays and Poems,
 ed. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill
 (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), p. 319.

⁸The Country Parson, Hutchinson, p. 271.

⁹Ibid.

then, interrupts the proper flow of creation and is a manifestation of God's displeasure, for the punishment or warning of men, who themselves can be said to cause the disorder by failing in their duty "to depend and fear continually" God, the Ruler of All.¹⁰

Men can cause disorder more directly too, simply by slovenliness of person or of action, and although this sort of disorder seems small compared to God's withheld order, Herbert cautions against it. In "The Familie" he says to God: "Where thou dwellest all is neat" (1. 8),¹¹ and in The Country Parson he gives touchingly explicit directions for men to follow God's example of neatness. The parson's church must be "swept, and kept cleane without dust or Cobwebs" and the "books appointed by Authority, to be in the church must be "not torne, or fouled, but whole and clean, and well bound."¹² As for the congregation, the parson "by no means [endures] either talking, or sleeping, or gazing, or leaning, or half-kneeling," and the congregation's responses must not be "in a hudling, or slubbering fashion, gaping, or scratching the head, or spitting even in the midst of their answer, but gently and pausably, thinking what they say; so that . . . they

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹p. 136.

¹²Hutchinson, p. 246.

meditate as they speak"13 Summers notes that it was a common belief in the seventeenth century "that God's creation was second only to His Word as a source of truth and enlightenment,"14 but Herbert cites the Word as well as God's example: "Let all things be done decently and in order," he quotes from I Corinthians xiv.40. Herbert calls this verse the first of "the Apostles two great and admirable Rules . . . that excellently score out the way, and fully, and exactly contain, even in externall and indifferent things what course is to be taken; and put them to great shame, who deny the Scripture to be perfect."15

As Herbert followed God's example and Word in his church and in the content of his poetry, he followed them in his poetic forms. The Temple itself is, of course, a whole, and not just a randomly arranged collection of religious poems. It is, as Eliot says, "a structure, and one which may have been worked over and elaborated, perhaps at intervals of time, before it reached its final form."16 A quick glance through the pages of The Temple is enough to show that Herbert's poetic forms are unusually

13 Ibid., p. 231.

14 p. 78.

15 The Country Parson, Hutchinson, pp. 246-47.

16 T. S. Eliot, George Herbert (London, 1962), p. 15.

varied from poem to poem,¹⁷ and a reading of The Temple shows that the forms are carefully ordered to enhance the sense of the poems. Characteristically, the forms of the separate poems, however different from each other, are orderly in themselves. Herbert rarely deviates from the metrical patterns he sets for a poem, and he often uses "conspicuously parallel" stanza structures.¹⁸ Because of "these characteristics of formal neatness," which contrast markedly with Donne's famous irregular rhythms, Mary Ellen Rickey observes with irony, "Herbert is made to play Surrey to Donne's Wyatt, since, obviously, a man who doesn't allow his iambs to get out of hand is incapable of a really personal poetic statement."¹⁹ Regularity and harmoniousness of verse, though, are as characteristic of Herbert's style as irregularity and dissonance are of Donne's. Herbert saw fit to return God's gifts in kind, as nearly as he could; therefore, in praising God Who created the great harmonious universe in which men dwell, Herbert created order and harmony in his poems. The melodious flow of Herbert's poetry is not a sign of

¹⁷ Eliot comments: "The exquisite variations of form in the . . . poems of The Temple show a resourcefulness of invention which seems inexhaustible, and for which I know no parallel in English poetry" (p. 31).

¹⁸ Rickey, p. 150.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 151 and 150. For a good example of this attitude toward Herbert, see Joan Bennett's Four Metaphysical Poets, pp. 63-64, where she says, among other things, "Poets of more complex moods cannot deal so simply with the problem of relating sound to sense."

facility but a sign of care, of fine craftsmanship, and certainly, as Miss Rickey warns, Herbert's "surface smoothness and meticulous organization" must not be taken for "genuine simplicity and limitation."²⁰

T. S. Eliot compares Donne's "Holy Sonnet (X)" with Herbert's "Prayer (I)" to show the "particular virtue, the unique flavor of each" poet and concludes:

The difference that I wish to emphasise is not that between the violence of Donne and the gentle imagery of Herbert, but rather a difference between the dominance of intellect over sensibility and the dominance of sensibility over intellect. Both men were highly intellectual, both men had very keen sensibility: but in Donne thought seems in control of feeling, and in Herbert feeling seems in control of thought.²¹

All that has been written about The Temple as Herbert's spiritual autobiography²² follows what Herbert himself said when, just before he died, he sent to Nicholas Ferrar the manuscript of The Temple, which he described as "a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have passed

²⁰Ibid., p. 152.

²¹pp. 16-17. Miss Rickey bristles at this statement, saying that it leads to misconceptions "certain to diminish one's respect for The Temple (p. 149). It seems to me that in order to chastize Eliot for this single statement, however, she had to remove it completely from the context of Eliot's appreciative and sensitive assessment of Herbert's poetry. It seems to me also that Miss Rickey, a literary critic and historian, is more likely to place strong emphasis on the conscious workings of the intellect in poetry than Eliot, who was a poet himself and, therefore, I think, more aware than she of the importance of "feeling" a poem.

²²See especially Eliot, pp. 19-20, and Summers, pp. 28 ff.

betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom."²³ Certainly it is fit that feeling seem to control thought in a picture of the soul's spiritual conflicts, since by its nature spiritual conflict is, in major part, emotional. Whereas Donne seems to translate his spiritual feelings into dramatic objective correlatives, striking paradoxes, or bold conceits to recreate his emotions in verse, Herbert seems not to translate for dramatic effect but to record his feelings more directly, relating them most often to the common objects or happenings around him. Donne says:

Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
("Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward," ll. 1-2)²⁴

and:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
("Holy Sonnet (XIV)," ll. 1-2)²⁵

but Herbert says:

What house more stately hath there been,
Or can be, then is Man? ("Man," ll. 4-5)²⁶

and:

²³Hutchinson, p. xxxvii.

²⁴Grierson, I, 336.

²⁵Ibid., p. 328.

²⁶p. 90.

O tame my heart;
 It is thy highest art
 To captivate strong holds to thee.
 ("Nature," ll. 4-6.)²⁷

In Herbert's poetry images are subordinated to the texture of the poem as a whole, so that simple images serve best. Herbert's two "Jordan" poems often are taken as his artist credo:

Who sayes that fictions onely and false hair
 Become a verse? Is there in truth no beautie?
 Is all good structure in a winding stair?

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

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

("Jordan (I)," ll. 1-3, 9-10, and 12-15.)²⁸

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

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

("Jordan (II)," ll. 1-6 and 15-18.)²⁹

Certainly Herbert both meant and practiced what he wrote in the "Jordan" poems. The poems of The Temple ring true;

²⁷p. 45.

²⁸pp. 56-57. Italics Herbert's. Unless otherwise noted, all the italics used in Herbert's poems quoted in this paper are Herbert's.

²⁹pp. 102-03

there is no falseness to them. Herbert writes not to prove how clever and versatile he is, but to communicate honest feelings and thought. The "Jordan" poems, however, have been misinterpreted as Herbert's renunciation of the metaphysical style and poetic depth in general. Joan Bennett says that the two poems show the simplicity Herbert intends and achieves, which would be a fine thing to say if she meant plainness of imagery, but she carefully explains that Herbert means to reject "the intellectual subtlety of Donne" and "the intellectual curiosities of Donne."³⁰ There is no lack of intellectual subtlety in Herbert's poems. One who reads beyond the smooth surfaces of the poems need not even see the subtle classical allusions³¹ or be fully aware of the symbolic charges of so many of Herbert's favorite "simple" words in order to enjoy and appreciate the rich, subtle suggestions built into Herbert's clean poetic structures. "Love (III)," which Miss Bennett quotes in its entirety and patronizingly dismisses as simple allegory with the weary traveller as the human soul and the hospitable host as God,³² is laden with subtle implication that is only enhanced by the quiet gentleness of its

³⁰Pp. 61 and 62.

³¹Miss Rickey devotes the first chapter of Utmost Art to Herbert's use of classical materials, which has been almost entirely overlooked before.

³²Pp. 71-72.

surface. "Love" of course is God, but He is "quick-ey'd," in direct contrast to the classical god of love, blind Cupid;³³ Love "made" the speaker's eyes in contrast with earthly love that blinds; and Love seduces the soul into heaven, the greatest good, in contrast to earthly seductions which lead into sin. In the poem Herbert also, consciously or not, uses images appropriate to a description of physical love. The classical god of love, earthly love, and physical love, then, are all suggested in and all subordinated by God Who made all and Who forgives all in His greatest Love. "Love (III)" is a good example of Herbert's use of apparently simple imagery, but it is equally good as an illustration of the depth beyond the smooth surface in Herbert's poems, which obviously are not, as Miss Bennett asserts, the products of "an unsophisticated mind."³⁴ Rather, Herbert is, as Eliot says, "a master of the simple everyday word in the right place, and [he] charges it with concentrated meaning . . ."³⁵

The language of Herbert's poems is as truly simple as the imagery seems to be. In The Temple short words, general words, the words of ordinary speech become the vehicles of exalted ideas. Many of the poems, including "Antiphon (I)," "Antiphon (II)," "Church-lock and key," "The Call," and

³³Rickey, p. 37.

³⁴p. 66.

³⁵p. 28.

"Discipline," have no word longer than two syllables, and in the rest of the poems the short, simple words predominate. Herbert's choice of general words is an important device for shaping his simple vocabulary into seemingly simple but actually complex images. He uses flowers, but the only ones he names specifically are the rose, which is rich with worldly and religious symbolic implication, and the lily, which he specifies only once. Similarly, the jewels, birds, beasts, angels, colors, stars, and sins that often appear in The Temple are rarely particularized. There are few proper names, those few being familiar Biblical names, and the technical words Herbert chooses are usually applicable to more than one type of action. If Herbert's mind had been as simple as his words, such generalization would lead to vagueness instead of richness; but Herbert uses such words to carry two, or sometimes more, entire systems of metaphor through his poems.³⁶

Herbert's years of classical study, his years of attachment to James's court, and his mastery of elegant seventeenth-century phraseology were not forgotten or cast aside as useless when he wrote The Temple. Herbert brought to his writing all he knew and experienced, but he used that great knowledge and experience as a literate man would use them in literate conversation. Herbert was a

³⁶Miss Rickey, pp. 163-66, discusses at length Herbert's use of general words.

man who not only understood what he knew and experienced but who also could and did communicate that understanding, in all its depth and intensity, to other men.

CHAPTER III
THE HOUSEHOLD IMAGERY

Thy glorious household-stuffe did me entwine,
And 'tice me unto thee.
("Affliction (I)," ll. 9-10.)¹

The surface simplicity and metrical regularity of Herbert's poems insure that their first impact is on the reader's senses and emotions rather than on the intellect, but the rich suggestions embroidered into the smooth surfaces appeal to the intellect enough to engage it with the ideas of the poems. Each poem in The Temple is concerned with some aspect of man's relationship with God; man is thankful, miserable, rebellious, humble--none of which attitudes is original or unusual, except that in Herbert's poems the man-God relationship is a full I-thou relationship, intense and intimate. Herbert can say abjectly to God: "Sorrise I am, my God, sorrise I am" ("Sinnes Round," l. 1),² but he can also tell God:

Throw away thy rod;
Though man frailties hath,
 Thou art God:
Throw away thy wrath.
 ("Discipline," ll. 29-32.)³

¹p. 46.

²p. 122.

³p. 179.

Herbert knows God, and he knows that God knows him. There can be no pretense in their relationship, and lofty language is pretentious. As a man in conversation with a friend uses the objects and actions familiar to him, the furnishings of his immediate environment, to illustrate points of his discourse, so Herbert uses familiar objects and happenings in his poetic conversations with and about God. By this connection of spiritual subject and material expression, Herbert simultaneously achieves striking juxtaposition and soothing integration.

God, as Herbert addresses Him in The Temple, is awesome and all-pervading, not because He is a wrathful deity with a handful of thunderbolts, but because He is all strength, all love, all creation. God created everything that man knows or can know, and because of His great love for His creation He uses His strength to guide creation. Herbert is always aware that God's strength and love are beyond man's imagination and beyond man's deserving and that, therefore, man is constantly presuming on God, constantly committing offenses against God that only God can be great enough to forgive. Herbert's most striking single expression of this idea is "Redemption":

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
 Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
 And make a suit unto him to afford
 A new small-rented lease, and cancell th'old.
 In heaven at his manour I him sought:
 They told me there, that he was lately gone
 About some land, which he had dearly bought

Long since on earth, to take possession.
 I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,
 Sought him accordingly in great resorts;
 In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:
 At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
 Of theeves and murderers; there I him espied,
 Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, & died.⁴

God is the Lord of Earth, the gracious, loving patriarch,
 the great householder of the universe. Man, as God's tenant,
 is totally dependent on God for his livelihood, and God
 provides for man as no earthly lord ever could do; God
 provides man with the earth and all that is in it, but,
 beyond that, through the sacrifice of Christ, God redeems
 man to eternal life.

Herbert's household imagery depends on the view of God
 as the householder of the universe and on the intimate
 relationship between man and God. The closeness to God that
 Herbert shows, as the speaker of the poems, is so immediate
 that the reader is drawn into the intimacy of Herbert's
 relationship with God and is made to see the all-pervasiveness
 of God and His Providence. In the household imagery great
 concepts appear in humble dress; and the humble, utilitarian
 things which Herbert uses to express spiritual concepts
 are themselves invested with new importance.

⁴p. 40.

The House Imagery

My God, I heard this day
That none doth build a stately habitation,
But he that means to dwell therein.
("Man," 11. 1-3.)⁵

The house, man's physical shelter, his earthly dwelling place, is a major image throughout The Temple. A temple, or church, of course, is God's house on earth, and in Herbert's time, as Summers points out, "the temple as a building was a hieroglyph for the body, particularly the human body in the service of God and the divine body of Christ."⁶ God's house on earth, then, is a body inhabited by God's spirit. Correspondingly, Herbert views the human body as a house inhabited by the human spirit, and the human spirit, although tainted with sin and earthly leanings, is holy, is a bit of God in man, so that man's body also houses God on earth. The concepts of man as a house in which God dwells and of God as the builder of man's dwellings are the bases of Herbert's use of the house as poetic image.

In "The World" Herbert allegorizes God's creation and care of the earth as the building and maintenance of a house. The title is the key to the allegory.

Love built a stately house; where Fortune came
And spinning phansies, she was heard to say,
That her fine cobwebs did support the frame,

⁵p. 90.

⁶p. 85.

Whereas they were supported by the same:
But Wisdom quickly swept them all away.

Then Pleasure came, who, liking not the fashion,
Began to make Balcones, Terraces,
Till she had weakned all by alteration:
But rev'rend laws, and many a proclamation
Reformed all at length with menaces.

Then enter'd Sinne, and with that Sycomore,
Whose leaves first sheilded man from drought & dew,
Working and winding sllily evermore,
The inward walls and sommers cleft and tore:
But Grace shor'd these, and cut that as it grew.

Then Sinne combin'd with Death in a firm band
To raze the building to the very floore:
Which they effected, none could them withstand.
But Love and Grace took Glorie by the hand,
And built a braver Palace then before.⁷

Any reader, keeping the title in mind as he reads "The World," can understand and even admire and enjoy the poem on a purely surface level. Although this is not one of Herbert's most complex poems, it is a good example of how the grace and smoothness of the surface can almost hide the depth of the poem. The situation is set in the first stanza, and the following stanzas parallel the first, each showing a deceitful, destructive force being turned back by a godly force. The seemingly ordinary opposing forces are, however, arranged in a theologically and historically meaningful progression. Herbert summarizes biblical history from the creation ("Love built a stately house") to the coming of Christ ("Love and Grace took Glorie by the hand") and, in the process, presents the contrast, which fascinates him,

⁷p. 84.

between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. God appears as "Love" from the beginning, but the differences in tone and implication between "rev'-rend laws, and many a proclamation/ Reformed . . . with menaces" and "Love and Grace took Glorie by the hand,/ And built a braver Palace then before" are as great and as obvious as the difference between the Testaments.

Throughout the poem, the world-house image is sustained plausibly. In the first stanza Fortune is personified as the classical goddess. She not only spins "phansies," lies, but she tells the great lie that the world depends on her arbitrary spinnings, rather than on the strength of God, for its support. Herbert calls her spinnings "cobwebs," which makes them objectionable as well as useless. The world-house is easily cleared of her guiles when Wisdom, like a good housewife taking a broom to the corners, sweeps the cobwebs away. Pleasure, in the second stanza, undertakes structural alteration of the stately house, whose design is not frivolous as she would like it. She adds balconies which would pull the walls down and terraces which would undermine the foundation. Pleasure's damage is harder to repair than Fortune's. Herbert puns on the word "reform" to show the extent of the damage Pleasure's attacks from the outside have had on the house. Sin comes next to the house and brings the fig tree with which man first hid

himself from God.⁸ The tree, "working and winding sliily evermore," as a growing, viney tree within a structure does, also becomes the "serpent . . . more subtil than any beast of the field" of Genesis iii.

Whereas Fortune marred the world-house superficially by deceit and Pleasure weakened it by exterior additions, Sin, working inside, "the inward walls and sommers cleft and tore." Sin damages the house so badly that the walls must be shored and the tree cut. But Sin, unlike Fortune and Pleasure, is determined to destroy the world-house and is not easily disposed of. When, in the final stanza, Sin and Death join forces, "none could them withstand." The house falls under their attack, because the end of the unredeemed world is eternal death. But, as Herbert shows in the quietly triumphant final lines, God's creative power is greater than all destruction. In two lines, all the more effective for being combined with the contrasting picture of utter destruction in the preceding three lines of the stanza, Herbert portrays Christ's salvation of the world. Love and Grace, insufficient in themselves against Sin and Death, lead Glory, Christ, to help rebuild the world-house that becomes "a braver palace then before." It is a palace, a royal house, because Christ actually dwells there; and it is "braver . . . then before" because, with Christ's coming,

⁸Hutchinson, p. 505, notes: "Sycomore was considered, by a mistaken etymology, to be a species of fig-tree."

the threat of mortal destruction in the world is replaced by the promise of immortal life beyond it.

"The World" is the only poem in The Temple in which the world-house image is used throughout. Herbert adheres to the strict form he set for the poem and uses only words which forward his major image, so that the poem is technically excellent. Yet, as allegorical as "The World" is, within the flawless picture presented on the surface are the nuances of wording, the emotional progression, and the intensity of meaning that make a poem effective. In the other poems in which Herbert employs the world-house image, it is subordinated to other images and appears only briefly. In "The H. Communion" Herbert writes that Adam "might to heav'n from Paradise go, / As from one room t'another" (ll. 35-36);⁹ in "Grace" Herbert says to God, "If the sunne should hide his face, / Thy house would but a dungeon prove" (ll. 5-6);¹⁰ and in "Man" Herbert says, "The starres have us to bed; / Night draws the curtain, which the sunne withdraws" (ll. 32-33).¹¹ Herbert relies on the idea of the world as a house more than he plays on it; although it is a basic and obvious analogical concept, its versatility as a major poetic image is limited.

⁹P. 53.

¹⁰P. 60.

¹¹P. 91.

More striking and versatile than the world-house idea is the idea of man as a house, which Herbert uses often and effectively in The Temple. The house as a symbol for man is not original with Herbert. Carl Jung cites this symbolic use of the house as archetypal and gives instances of its occurrence in recorded dreams from as early as the second century A.D.¹² As an archetypal or collective image, the house symbolizing man has a deep appeal that makes it both satisfying and intriguing. Herbert would not, of course, have been consciously aware of the archetypal appeal of his man-house imagery, but he certainly was aware of Christian theological uses of the image. Saint Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "Ye are God's building," and "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"¹³ There are other uses of this image in the Bible, which Herbert knew well. It is likely that Herbert, as a religious poet intensely aware of the tradition in which he wrote, relied on the theological uses of the man-house image for some of the suggestive effect of the poems in which he used the image.

The man-house image appears at its least complex in "Man," where it is used in the opening and closing stanzas.

¹²Carl G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (London, 1964), p. 78.

¹³I Corinthians iii.9 and 16.

"Man," a more formally stated poem than Herbert usually writes, is structured as a simplified classical oration, beginning and ending with the contention that man is a fit habitation for God and with the seven stanzas between as confirmatio advancing the argument by different images that show the importance of man's position in creation. Herbert opens "Man" with a clear statement of his argument.

My God, I heard this day,
That none doth build a stately habitation,
But he that means to dwell therein.
What house more stately hath there been,
Or can be, then is Man? to whose creation
All things are in decay. (Ll. 1-6.)¹⁴

Neither the intimacy of tone nor the subtle depth of meaning that often mark Herbert's poetry distinguishes this stanza, which is, as Miss Rickey remarks, "Biblical commonplace."¹⁵

As the opening stanza of "Man" is obviously the exordium of Herbert's argument, the closing stanza is, equally obviously, the peroratio:

Since then, my God, thou hast
So brave a palace built; O dwell in it,
That it may dwell with thee at last!
Till then afford us so much wit;
That, as the world serves us, we may serve thee,
And both thy servants be. (Ll. 49-54.)¹⁶

14p. 90.

15p. 143.

16p. 92.

Because it is a prayer and more personal, this stanza is more typical of Herbert's poetic tone than the first stanza. To finish his argument for man Herbert employs the same strengthened house image he uses in "The World." "So brave a Palace," he calls man in the final stanza, after having called him "a stately habitation" in the first. Referring to man as a palace, Herbert prays, "O dwell in it, / That it may dwell with thee at last," and although the use of the indefinite, third-person pronoun might seem to depersonalize the prayer, in this case it does not because Herbert's words echo the final words of the Anglican Communion prayer, "that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us."

The poetic strength of "Man" does not depend on the stanzas in which Herbert uses the man-house image, but those stanzas do express the basis of Herbert's use of the image: that man, as the highest of earthly creatures, is the most suitable earthly dwelling place for God. Man, the microcosm, is troubled by the same conflicts as the macrocosm, which Herbert shows in "The World." It is these conflicting forces within man that Herbert most often uses the man-house to illustrate.

The man-house is frail, as Herbert shows by simile in "Giddinesse."

[Man] builds a house, which quickly down must go,
 As if a whirlwinde blew
 And crusht the building: and it's partly true,
 His minde is so. (Ll. 13-16.)¹⁷

The constant attention of God is man's only hope of stability, the only antidote to man's giddiness.

Lord, mend or rather make us: one creation
 Will not suffice our turn:
 Except thou make us dayly, we shall spurn
 Our own salvation. (Ll. 25-28.)¹⁸

Alone, man is helpless, for "One cunning bosome-sinne blows quite away" ("Sinne (I)," l. 14)¹⁹ all his protection and defenses. The man-house, once built, needs not only repair but rebuilding, simply because it is on earth and of earth.

Herbert treats the base forces that encroach into the man-house in "Sepulchre," "Good Friday," and "Confession." The great contrast between man's baseness and God's magnanimity provides the dramatic tension in all three poems. The man-God contrast is most obvious in "Sepulchre," which Herbert develops entirely by imagistic contrast and comparison. In "Sepulchre" Herbert provides a concrete basis for comparing man to the stone vault that held Christ by uniting the two imagistically. The idea of comparing man to Christ's sepulchre is startling and could easily be the basis of a highly intellectualized Donnean conceit, but Herbert treats the idea itself almost lightly. He begins the poem with implied contrast between man and the sepulchre:

O Blessed bodie! Whither art thou thrown?
 No lodging for thee, but a cold hard stone?

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ p. 46.

So many hearts on earth, and yet not one
 Receive thee?
 Sure there is room within our hearts good store;
 For they can lodge transgressions by the score:
 Thousands of toys dwell there, yet out of doore
 They leave thee.
 (Ll. 1-8.)²⁰

The man-house image is introduced here quietly and easily. In line two Herbert uses "lodging," referring to the sepulchre, and in the next two lines builds the lodging image but in connection with men's hearts rather than the sepulchre. The grounds for comparison between men and the sepulchre are laid by Herbert's representing both by the lodging image, which he does not mention explicitly after the first stanza. The heart-lodgings seem dismissed in the first line of the second stanza.

But that which shews them large, shews them unfit.
 What ever sinne did this pure rock commit,
 Which holds thee now? Who hath indited it
 Of murder?
 Where our hard hearts have took up stones to brain
 thee,
 And missing this, most falsly did arraigne thee;
 Onely these stones in quiet entertain thee,
 And order. (Ll. 9-16.)²¹

Here the comparison centers on the word "stone," but the impact of the last two lines of the stanza depends on the heart-lodging image as much as on the comparison between the "pure rock" and the "hard hearts." "Onely these stones in quiet entertain thee,/ And Order" is in obvious and uncomplimentary contrast to the description of men's disordered

²⁰P. 40.

²¹P. 41.

hearts that ends the first stanza: "Thousands of toys dwell there, yet out of doore/ They leave thee."

The second stanza completes Herbert's picture of man for the purposes of "Sepulchre." The third, last stanza Herbert devotes to God, Who, in the first two stanzas, is shown only as the object of men's callousness and cruelty. The legal terminology that appears in the second stanza is Herbert's means of transition into the third stanza and also the means of introducing a new contrast, that between the Old and New Testament attitudes of God. In this stanza, the man-house image appears once:

. . .thou, which also art
The letter of the word, findest no fit heart
To hold thee. (Li. 18-20.)²²

Since this stanza supplies the divine aspect of the man-God contrast, the heart-lodging image here does not so much reinforce as remind of what has gone before. The final lines of the poem, too, depend on reminder to complete the man-God contrast.

. . .Nothing can,
Though it be cold, hard, foul, from loving man
Withhold thee. (Li. 22-24.)²³

This general statement is the climax of the poem. The effectiveness of the statement and of the entire man-God contrast in "Sepulchre" lies in the three specific adjectives,

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

"cold, hard, foul," which refer back to and summarize the description of man as connected with the sepulchre, and, in doing so, exemplify the tight construction of the entire poem. "Sepulchre" slides easily from one image to another, but within each image is a mention of stone, the stone of the sepulchre, which is united in the reader's mind with the heart-lodging image from the opening of the poem. Unlike the series of separate images in "Man," the images in "Sepulchre" are more than the sum of their whole. The images in "Sepulchre," a much shorter poem than "Man," all depend on and connect with what has gone before, in order to provide an indivisible, emotionally effective whole. The ideas projected through the clear images in "Sepulchre" move easily, not because they are simple but because they are carefully and fittingly illustrated.

Man's heart appears less foul in "Good Friday," which is a less complex poem than "Sepulchre." The second section of "Good Friday," an invitation for Christ to dwell in the speaker's heart, depends on the man-house image throughout.

Since bloud is fittest, Lord, to write
 Thy sorrows in, and bloudie fight;
 My heart hath store, write there, where in
 One box doth lie both ink and sinne:

That when sinne spies so many foes,
 Thy whips, thy nails, thy wounds, thy woes,
 All come to lodge there, sinne may say,
No room for me, and flie away.

Sinne being gone, of fill the place,
 And keep possession with thy grace;

Lest sinne take courage and return,
 And all the writings blot or burn.
 (Ll. 21-32.)²⁴

None of the bitterness toward man that colors "Sepulchre" marks these lines. The man-house in "Good Friday" is filled with sin, but the man, instead of rejecting Christ, seeks to rid himself of sin by inviting God into his heart. Using an intimate tone, Herbert shows that the speaker is aware both that sin is living in him and that he alone is powerless against it. As in "Giddinesse," Herbert emphasizes the vulnerability of the man-house by inviting God not only to imprint the record of His sacrifice within the heart but to lodge there permanently, "lest sinne take courage and return,/ And all the writings blot or burn."

Herbert personifies Christ's sorrows as the foes of sin in "Good Friday," and although the memory of those sorrows brings man grief, it also insures his salvation. In "Confession" Herbert speaks of a harmful grief within man, the grief caused by sin. Through three stanzas of the five-stanza poem Herbert shows how the man-house becomes a self-imposed prison when man attempts, without God's help, to stifle the sin-caused grief within him.

O what a cunning guest
 Is this same grief! within my heart I made
 Closets; and in them many a chest;

²⁴p. 39. "Good Friday" is divided into two distinct sections, which appear in the Williams manuscript as separate poems. (See Hutchinson's note, p. 39.)

And like a master in my trade,
 In those chests, boxes; in each box a till:
 Yet grief knows all, and enters when he will.
 (Ll. 1-6.)²⁵

The speaker is aware of the hurtful sin within him but is not aware, as the speaker of "Good Friday" is, of the necessity of God's help in getting rid of the sin. He tries to hide his sins in closets, chests, boxes, tills, which serve only to lock the sins within him and, like the "thousands of toys" in "Sepulchre," uselessly clutter the man-house. God's afflictions, which plague the sinful man, "are too subtil for the subt'lest hearts" (l. 12),²⁶ Herbert explains. "No smith can make such locks but they have keys:/ Closets are halls to them; and hearts high-ways" (ll. 17-18).²⁷ But, paradoxically,

Onely an open breast
 Doth shut them out; so that they cannot enter;

 Smooth open hearts no fastning have; but fiction
 Doth give a hold and handle to affliction.
 (Ll. 19-20 and 23-24.)²⁸

Man's heart is not supposed to be subtle. In building secret places within himself, man is catering to the base forces that would usurp his heart from God. The dark recesses of the boxes and tills are "fiction" because they are supposed to hide sin but actually serve as strongholds

²⁵p. 126.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

for sin and because the man-constructed additions to the man-house are, like Fortune's cobwebs and Pleasure's balconies and terraces in "The World," attempted improvements on God's clear, clean creation.

By confession, man admits his need of God's help:

. . . my faults and sinnes,
 Lord, I acknowledge; take thy plagues away:
 For since confession pardon winnes,
 I challenge here the brightest day,
 The clearest diamond: let them do their best,
 They shall be thick and cloudie to my breast.
 (Ll. 25-30.)²⁹

In acknowledging his sins, man is rid of all the ineffectual defenses with which he has cluttered his heart. God's pardon cleans the man-house of sins and afflictions, but it may stay clean only as long as it is completely open to God.

The man-house appears as a fortified castle in the military imagery of "The H. Communion." Sin and God, the same two forces that occupy the man-house in the previously discussed poems, are opposed in "The H. Communion," but since man by partaking of Communion is welcoming God into himself, the theme of conflict that dominates the other poems becomes a theme of joyous, rightful victory.

. . . By the way of nourishment and strength
 Thou creep'st into my breast;
 Making thy way my rest,
 And thy small quantities my length;
 Which spread their forces into every part,
 Meeting sinnes force and art.

²⁹Ibid.

Yet can these not get over to my soul,
 Leaping the wall that parts
 Our souls and fleshy hearts;
 But as th' outworks they may controll
 My rebel flesh, and carrying thy name,
 Affright both sinne and shame.

Onely thy grace, which with these elements comes
 Knoweth the ready way,
 And hath the privie key,
 Op'ning the souls most subtile rooms;
 While those to spirits refin'd, at doore attend
 Dispatches from their friend.

(Ll. 6-24.)³⁰

In his other uses of the man-house image, Herbert makes no distinction between the physical and the spiritual parts of man. Here, however, he not only distinguishes the heart from the soul but shows the division of God's forces into physical, the host, and spiritual, "thy grace, which with these elements comes." Besides lending more dramatic force to the imagery, this delineation between physical and spiritual emphasizes the Anglican rejection of transubstantiation.

The man-house in "The H. Communion" is partitioned, locked, and "subtile," as was the man-house in "Confession," but, unlike "Confession," in "The H. Communion" this division is good. The division is for the protection of the soul and is natural, rather than man-imposed as the partitioning in "Confession" is. Herbert calls the physical structure of man "th' outworks," which relegates the flesh to a position of minor importance in the man-castle as a whole.

The "rebel-flesh," invaded by sin, is cleansed and renewed by the physical forces of God, the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The soul, however, which also must be renewed from outside of man, is physically inaccessible.

Yet can these not get over to my soul
Leaping the wall that parts
Our souls and fleshy hearts.

The soul, as Herbert shows it, cannot be reached by sin any more than by the physical components of Holy Communion, but the soul can be besieged by sin in the flesh that encloses it and, thereby, be cut off from its sustenance. By breaking sin's seige, the Communion food clears the way for God's grace to enter the soul, which Herbert depicts as the inmost rooms of the man-castle, guarded by "those to spirits refin'd." Thus the Holy Communion is completed: God's grace renews its occupation of the soul within the purified body. The man-castle is repossessed by its rightful Lord.

In "The Forerunners" the man-house makes its final appearance in The Temple. White hairs are shown as the forerunners of old age and decay that strip a man of his physical abilities. Herbert addresses the forerunners in the beginning of the second stanza: "Good men ye be, to leave me my best room, / Ev'n all my heart, and what is lodged there" (ll. 7-8); and he ends the poem with

Go birds of spring: let winter have his fee
Let a bleak paleness chalk the doore,

So all within be livelier then before.
(L1. 34-36.)³¹

As the first and last stanzas of "Man" express the basis of Herbert's use of the man-house image, these two passages from "The Forerunners" epitomize the attitude underlying Herbert's use of the image. The man-house is worthwhile only as a dwelling for God. The man who is aware of God within him anticipates a richer life beyond the earth, so that as his earthly body succumbs to age, "all within [is] livelier then before." But without God there is nothing for man but decay.

The decay of all that is earthly is the theme of "Mortification," which begins: "How soon doth man decay?" In each stanza an ordinary human action is made to represent a phase of man's life, from infancy through old age, and Herbert transforms these actions into reminders of man's mortality. In the fourth stanza, which shows maturity, Herbert employs a grim and unique house image.

When man grows staid and wise,
Getting a house and home, where he may move
Within the circle of his breath,
Schooling his eyes;
That dumbe inclosure maketh love
Unto the coffin, that attends his death.
(L1. 19-24.)³²

In "Sepulchre" the man-house is foul and cluttered; in

³¹pp. 176-77.

³²p. 98.

"Giddinesse" the house is frail; no other poem in The Temple, however, shows a house so frightening as this one in "Mortification." There is claustrophobic emphasis on the smallness of the house, which illustrates the smallness of man's life. The line breaks between lines twenty and twenty-one, and twenty-three and twenty-four are especially effective in furthering the idea of the limits of mortality. Line twenty ends with "move," suggesting spatial freedom, but line twenty-one negates the suggestion by the qualification "within the circle of his breath." The abrupt contrast between the end of line twenty-three and the beginning of line twenty-four is more startling. The coffin, which is to come in line twenty-four, is suggested by the description of the house in line twenty-three as "that dumbe inclosure." Since the physical limitations of the house have, up to this point, implied man's physical limitations, the dumbness of the house becomes an ominous foreshadowing of the dumbness imposed on man by death. By connecting the house and coffin with the verb "maketh love," Herbert suggests a grotesque cooperativeness between the two, so that the house seems not only a reminder of man's mortality but an agent of it as well. The absolute physical closeness implied by "maketh love" gives this image the macabre insinuation that death is incorporated into the house, even as man breathes there.

Mortal man is cramped, confined on earth. Although God dwells in the soul within man's body, that body will decay. God dwells in the temporary man-house, as Herbert says in "Man," in order that man may dwell for ever in God's home, heaven. Saint Paul called heaven "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,"³³ and Herbert, too, shows heaven as a house, which is the true home of man's spirit.

In "The Pulley" Herbert describes God at creation giving his gifts to man.

When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottome lay.

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

(Ll. 8-15.)³⁴

In all his poetic references to heaven, Herbert pictures it as the place of this withheld gift, rest. Without rest, the soul, captured in the body on earth, can have no comfort; therefore, the soul longs always for heaven, its home in God.

Whereas the man-house appears in The Temple often and in some architectural detail, Herbert usually mentions the

³³ II Corinthians v.1.

³⁴ p. 160.

heaven-house only briefly and insinuates rather than shows the rewards of eternity with God. Rarely does he describe heaven any more fully than in "Home," which, although it is a seventy-eight line poem about the soul's homesickness for heaven, has only two lines of direct description of heaven. "That nest,/ That hive of sweetness," Herbert says in lines nineteen and twenty, but mostly he suggests the comfort of heaven through implied contrast with earth, as in the tenth stanza:

We talk of harvests; there are no such things,
 But when we leave our corn and hay:
 There is no fruitfull yeare, but that which brings
 The last and lov'd, though dreadfull day.
(Ll. 55-58.)³⁵

The man-house is tangible; heaven is not. It is what the Christian strives for but can never reach from earth. When Herbert uses the heaven-house image, he usually emphasizes man's striving for heaven, as he does in "Home," instead of attempting to show the attractions of the heaven-house.

The door is the only specific part of the heaven-house that Herbert often refers to. In "Gratefulnesse" he shows man on earth as a beggar at the door of heaven.

Perpetuall knockings at thy doore,
 Tears sullyng thy transparent rooms,
 Gift upon gift, much would have more,
And comes. (Ll. 13-16.)³⁶

³⁵p. 108.

³⁶p. 124.

The description of the heaven-house, "thy transparent rooms," is, like the description in "Home," short and elusive. There is not even that much description in "Whitsunday," where Herbert shows only the door: "Thou shutt'st the doore, and keep'st within;/ Scarce a good joy creeps through the chink" (ll. 21-22).³⁷ The door alone appears in "Church-musick" also. Beginning with "sweetest of sweets," Herbert lauds the bodiless beauty of church music throughout the poem, which ends with the ultimate compliment: "You know the way to heavens doore" (l. 12).³⁸

In only one poem in The Temple does Herbert give a concrete picture of the heaven-house. "Love (III)," the final poem in The Church, shows the soul, after its life-journey is over, being welcomed into heaven.

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

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

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?

37p. 60.

38p. 66.

My deare, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.³⁹

Here, at last, heaven is more than just the place where man wants to be. It is the place of absolute love, God's love that forgives all, and Herbert chooses to express that love through dialogue rather than description. The road-weary traveller addresses the host as his superior yet argues with him honestly, instead of speaking obsequiously, and the host, for his part, is firm but never patronizing. In the end, then, when God overcomes all the soul's arguments of its unworthiness, the soul is not simply accepting the judgment of its superior but is convinced and, therefore, at ease. "So I did sit and eat." In the presence of God, the soul has found its resting place, its comfort. Herbert does not need to provide a physical description of heaven because it is this comfort, the ultimate hospitality of God as shown in his replies to the soul, not any richly sensuous surroundings, that makes the heaven-house perfect. Through simple words and carefully controlled tone of the dialogue between God and the soul, Herbert presents a concrete and beautiful image of heaven.

In his house images Herbert presents the theological life-cycle of creation. God builds the world-house for man to dwell in; then God comes to the world and dwells in the man-house, in order to insure that man may come to dwell in

³⁹pp. 188-89.

the heaven-house for eternity. All three dwellings, world, man, and heaven, are built by God, the great householder of the universe, Who provides for man from genesis to eternity.

The Furniture Imagery

I looked on thy furniture so fine,
 And made it fine to me.
 ("Affliction (I)," ll. 6-7.)⁴⁰

Within the house is furniture, which also serves Herbert for poetic images. God, as householder of the universe, provides furniture as well as dwellings for man, and Herbert writes of two types of God-made furniture, the natural furnishings of earth and the figurative furnishings of the soul. The natural furniture of the world-house is not used for any major or expanded images in The Temple. Usually, Herbert mentions the world-house furniture in such a generalized way that the image includes all nature, as it does in "Affliction (I)."

I looked on thy furniture so fine,
 And made it fine to me:
 Thy glorious household-stuffe did me entwine,
 And 'tice me unto thee.
 Such starres I counted mine: both heav'n and earth
 Payd me my wages in a world of mirth.
 (Ll. 6-12.)⁴¹

This furniture image is actually more generalized than

⁴⁰P. 46.

⁴¹Ibid.

usual, because, besides referring to all nature, Herbert uses the general words "furniture" and "houshold-stuffe." The stars are the only specific bit of nature or furniture in this stanza, but the generality of the image does not detract from the poetic effect of the lines since they deal with the speaker's reaction to nature rather than nature itself.

Because the subject of The Temple is the man-God relationship, and because Herbert is always careful not to adore God's gifts instead of God, the images showing the world-house furniture are, like the example from "Affliction (I)," more concerned with man's view of nature as a gift of God than with the physical characteristics of the natural furniture. Most often, Herbert represents the nature furniture by cupboards or cabinets. Praising the wonders of God's providence, he says, "Thy cupboard serves the world: the meat is set,/ Where all may reach" ("Providence," ll. 49-50).⁴² In "Grief" the cupboard image becomes a simple variation of the world-house image when Herbert calls the whole world "a narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts" (l. 11).⁴³ The same is true in "Man," in which Herbert says, "The whole [world] is, either our cupboard of food,/ Or cabinet of pleasure" (ll. 29-30).⁴⁴ Another nature-

42p. 118.

43p. 164.

44p. 91.

furniture image, not involving a cupboard or cabinet, appears in "Man." "The starres have us to bed;/ Night draws the curtain, which the sunne withdraws" (ll. 31-32).⁴⁵ All of these images imply the man-centered universe, which Herbert affects, for obvious theological reasons, in his poetry, and, certainly, none of the images is complicated or profound.

In "The Temper (II)" and "Ungratefulness" Herbert uses furniture images to reveal spiritual concepts. The images in these poems, although more extended than any of the nature-furniture images, are still not complex. The second half of "The Temper (II)" is very much like the second part of "Good Friday," in which Herbert invites God to live in his heart.

O fix thy chair of grace, that all my powers
 May also fix their reverence:
 For when thou dost depart from hence,
 They grow unruly, and sit in thy bowers.

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

("The Temper (II)," ll. 9-16.)⁴⁶

In "Good Friday" Herbert asks God to "keep possession with thy grace" (l. 30),⁴⁷ and "O fix thy chair of grace" is the same request only slightly reworded. The fixed chair

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶p. 56.

⁴⁷p. 39.

in line nine serves to introduce the idea of God as the ruling power in man, but it is the image of God's court in man, not the furniture image, that dominates the two stanzas.

In "Ungratefulnesse" the furniture image is the basic image of the poem and is extended from the beginning of the second stanza through the end of the poem.

Thou hast but two rare cabinets full of treasure,
 The Trinitie, and Incarnation:
 Thou hast unlockt them both,
 And made them jewels to betroth
 The work of thy creation
 Unto thyself in everlasting pleasure.

The statelier cabinet is the Trinitie,
 Whose sparkling light access denies:
 Therefore thou dost not show
 This fully to us, till death blow
 The dust into our eyes:
 For by that powder thou wilt make us see.

But all thy sweets are packt up in the other;
 Thy mercies thither flock and flow:
 That as the first affrights,
 This may allure us with delights;
 Because this box we know;
 For we have all of us just such another.

But man is close, reserv'd, and dark to thee:
 When thou demandest but a heart,
 He cavils instantly.
 In his poore cabinet of bone
 Sinnes have their box apart,
 Defrauding thee, who gavest two for one.

(Ll. 7-30.)⁴⁸

"Ungratefulnesse" is, for good reason, not considered one of Herbert's better poems. Until line twenty-three ("Because this box we know"), the cabinet imagery seems awkward and superimposed, a rather unsuccessful vehicle of

intellectualized dogma. Both cabinets, the Trinity and Incarnation, are furniture of the heaven-house, but the Trinity-cabinet in this poem occupies the place the heaven-house itself occupies in other poems, whereas the Incarnation cabinet seems more an open corridor between heaven and earth than a cabinet. The Trinity-cabinet is as intangible as the heaven-house, and Herbert gives as little physical description of it as of the heaven-house: its "sparkling light access denies." This image of the Trinity as a cabinet into which man on earth cannot see is as plausible and potentially as effective as the corresponding heaven-house image; however, by showing the Incarnation, too, as a cabinet, Herbert overextends the furniture imagery of "Ungratefulness." The Incarnation is, by definition, physical and, therefore, accessible to man, which Herbert shows by making the Incarnation-cabinet open to earth. But, according to Christian doctrine, the Incarnation also is a manifestation of the Trinity, which connection Herbert does not show when he makes the two separate cabinets. The concept of the Incarnation just does not fit the concrete image of a cabinet into which Herbert forces it in order to make it conform with the less forced Trinity- and man-cabinets. Here, for once, Herbert imposes intellectualized imagery over the message of the poem instead of merging vehicle and message into a harmonious whole.

The only concreteness the Incarnation-cabinet acquires comes through Herbert's connection of it with the man-cabinet. "This box we know;/ For we have all of us just such another." But as the Trinity-cabinet is a variation of the heaven-house, the strikingly concrete "poore cabinet of bone" is a variation of the man-house and appears in the same capacity as the man-house. Like the man-house in "Confession," the man-cabinet is "close, reserv'd, and dark" to God, and like the man-house in "Good Friday," it contains a box of sins.

Although man-made furniture only appears in short images in three poems in The Temple, it is the most striking of the types of Herbert's furniture imagery. The chair image in the first stanza of "Jordan (I)" is probably the best known of Herbert's furniture images.

Who says that fictions onely and false hair
 Become a verse? Is there in truth no beaultie?
 Is all good structure in a winding stair?
 May no lines passe except they do their dutie
 Not to a true, but painted chair? (Ll. 1-5.)⁴⁹

Truth for Herbert is always God, and since "Jordan (I)" is concerned with the differences between elaborate secular poetry and plain religious poetry, it is clear that the "true" chair, like the chair in "The Temper (II)," implies God's throne and, in doing so, represents God. The poet's lines doing their duty to the chair become subjects bowing

before the throne, as man's own powers bend before the power of God in "The Temper (II)," but in "Jordan (I)" the contrasting "true" and "painted" chairs form a quick, vivid image that is itself of major symbolic importance in the poem.⁵⁰

In Herbert's time, the chair was often used as a symbol of old age and death,⁵¹ and the chair images in "Mortification" and "The Pilgrimage" follow this tradition, although knowledge of the tradition is not necessary in order to grasp either image. "Mortification" is a morbid poem, and the chair there, like all the other earthly objects mentioned in the poem, is only a reminder of death.

When age grows low and weak,

A chair or litter shows the bier,
Which shall convey him to the house of death.

(Ll. 25 and 29-30.)⁵²

The chair in the last line of "The Pilgrimage" is more attractive and is, perhaps, the most poetically successful of all Herbert's furniture images. "The Pilgrimage" is an allegory about the Christian journeying through the perils

⁵⁰For a discussion of the many possible implications of "painted" in this poem, see Miss Rickey, pp. 30-32, where she says, among other things, that Herbert means us to recall Plato's Republic X. 597-98 when we read this line. The connection is not far-fetched, but it seems to me irrelevant.

⁵¹See Hutchinson, p. 512, for corresponding quotations from Shakespeare and Southwell.

⁵²p. 98.

of life in search of the hill of his "expectation." For five stanzas he toils his way and even thinks, once, that he has arrived on the hill, but

My hill was further: so I flung away,
 Yet heard a crye
 Just as I went, None goes that way
And lives: If that be all, said I,
 After so foul a journey death is fair,
 And but a chair.

(Ll. 31-35.)⁵³

This is Herbert's household imagery at its best. For thirty-three lines, the rather formalized and conventional Christian allegory has depicted the weariness and difficulty of life, but in the last two lines the speaker casts away formality, convention, and allegory to make a simple, direct statement which contrasts with the rest of the poem in tone as well as imagery. "Death is fair,/ And but a chair." The simple dignity of the statement complements the suggestion of relief and rest that the chair image brings to the poem. In "Mortification," where Herbert is exhorting men to prepare themselves for death, the chair image is a gloomy one, but in "The Pilgrimage," where death is mentioned only after the man has seen and suffered life, the chair is welcome and soothing, as death is supposed to be for the Christian.

Except for the symbolic man-made furniture, Herbert's furniture imagery serves him most and best as short, clear,

uncomplicated references. Often the furniture images depend on the implication of a house image, as in "Affliction (I)" or "The Temper (II)," and sometimes they are substantially the same as the house imagery, as is the case with several of the cabinet images. The house represents the shelter necessary to man's survival, but furniture is a convenience. Usually Herbert treats it as a convenience in his poetry. Whereas he uses the house image with its greater physical, structural possibilities for unstrained, extended conceits, his effective furniture images are limited to short metaphors and single symbols. The art involved in the short, vivid images becomes obvious when such images are contrasted with a long, overworked image like the one in "Ungratefulnesse."

The Food Imagery

The God of love my shepherd is,
 And he doth feed me.
 ("The 23d Psalme," 11. 1-2.)⁵⁴

Since food is not only a necessity of life but is also directly related to taste imagery, it has been a major source of imagery in religious metaphor since long before the Christian religion began and, probably, long before writing began. Food imagery abounds in both the Old and New Testaments; many of Jesus' parables and miracles involve

⁵⁴p. 172.

food; and, of course, the symbolic value of the Holy Communion is invested in food. Because its religious symbolic value is commonly understood, food imagery appears in far more poems in The Temple than the house and the furniture imagery combined, but, for the same reason, little of the food imagery seems as outstanding or original as the better house and furniture imagery. Often, the food imagery, like the nature-furniture imagery, serves for short, quick references within the framework of a more extended image. For instance, the Communion food in "The H. Communion" becomes an army in the predominant military imagery of that poem, and the food in "Love (III)" is only part of the hospitality that greets the soul entering heaven. In most of his food images Herbert relies on the traditional religious symbolism of food as spiritual sustenance or as a manifestation of God's providence.

There are only three references in The Temple to food as a strictly earthly necessity. The most outstanding of these references is the food image in "Home," which shows the earth holding man captive through biological necessity. "What is this weary world; this meat and drink,/ That chains us by the teeth so fast?" (Ll. 36-37.)⁵⁵ In "The Agonie" Herbert relies on the image of the food drive to demonstrate sin's effect on man. "Sinne is that presse and vice, which forceth pain/ To hunt his cruell food

55p. 108.

through ev'ry vein" (ll. 11-12).⁵⁶ The dissatisfaction of hunger is used in "The Glimpse" to show frustration. The speaker addresses Delight: "Thy short abode and stay/ Feeds not, but addes to the desire of meat" (ll. 11-12).⁵⁷ None of these is a pleasant image; in fact, pure biological necessity becomes a painful force in all three poems.

When Herbert shows food as part of God's bounty to man, however, it becomes good as well as necessary. Man by praising food as a gift of God, in its proper place in God's orderly household, is praising God. In "Faith," as in "The Glimpse," Herbert speaks of hunger, but in "Faith" the hunger is used to show how God satisfies the faithful.

Hungrie I was, and had no meat:
I did conceit a most delicious feast;
I had it straight, and did as truly eat,
As ever did a welcome guest. (Ll. 5-8.)⁵⁸

In "Providence," cataloging the evidences of God's love and power in the world, Herbert says,

Thy cupboard serves the world: the meat is set,
Where all may reach; no beast but knows his feed.
Birds teach us hawking; fishes have their net:
The great prey on the lesse, they on some weed.

Nothing ingendred doth prevent his meat:
Flies have their table spread, ere they appeare.
Some creatures have in winter what to eat;
Others do sleep, and envie not their cheer.
(Ll. 49-56.)⁵⁹

⁵⁶p. 37.

⁵⁷p. 154.

⁵⁸p. 50.

⁵⁹p. 118.

God's perfect orderliness, as well as His providence, is praised here, and food becomes symbolic of all natural order. In "The Priesthood" food is seen in harmony with the whole of earth.

But since those great ones, be they ne're so great
 Come from the earth, from whence those vessels come;
 So that at once both feeder, dish, and meat
 Have one beginning and one finall summe:
 I do not greatly wonder at the sight,
 If earth in earth delight.

(Ll. 19-24.)⁶⁰

Throughout The Temple, Herbert uses food imagery to express the nourishment of man's spirit by God-given food, real or figurative. Occasionally in these images Herbert mentions a specific food, but, most often, he describes the taste of the spiritual food simply as "sweet," an adjective which carries pleasing connotations beyond its use as a taste image. "Sweet" introduces the food imagery of "The Glance." Herbert says that when God's "sweet and gracious eye" first looked upon him,

I felt a sugred strange delight,
 Passing all cordials made by any art,
 Bedew, embalme, and overrunne my heart,
 And take it in. (Ll. 5-8.)⁶¹

Beginning with taste imagery, Herbert broadens the sensual impact of the cordial image to include the kinesthetic and tactile senses by describing the effect of God's glance in

⁶⁰P. 161.

⁶¹p. 171.

terms of the effect of a strong cordial. The theme of sweetness is reinforced by the words "sugred," "cordials," and "embalme" (which, here, suggests rubbing with an aromatic, perhaps healing, potion, not treating a dead body), but the image conveys the strength of God as well as His sweetness. In "The H. Scriptures. I," Herbert describes again the sweetness God brings to man.

Oh Book! infinite sweetnesse! let my heart
 Suck ev'ry letter, and a hony gain,
 Precious for any grief in any part;
 To cleare the breast, to mollifie all pain.
 (Ll. 1-4.)⁶²

Here, the spirit is fed honey instead of cordial, but the honey, too, is shown as having a strong effect, "To cleare the breast, to mollifie all pain."

The taste of the spiritual food is, of course, secondary in importance to its effect, because spiritual sustenance is at least as necessary to the Christian as physical food. Indeed, Herbert advises that man, while feeding his body, should ponder the feeding of the soul:

But as birds drink, and straight lift up their head,
 So [man] must sip and think
 Or better drink
 He may attain to, after he is dead.
 ("Mans medley," ll. 21-24.)⁶³

The spiritual food is more than a gift from God; it contains God, who is the inner strength of man. In "The Glance,"

62p. 58.

63p. 131.

the effect of God's glance is translated into food imagery, and in "The H. Scriptures. I" man feeds on the word of God, but the spiritual food that Herbert mentions most is the God-stuff.

Who knows not love, let him assay
 And taste that juice, which on the cross a pike
 Did set again abroach; then let him say
 If ever he did taste the like.
 Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
 Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.
 ("The Agonie," ll. 13-18.)⁶⁴

Food from God appears often in the Old Testament, but God himself as food comes only through the sacrifice of Christ. Herbert compares the God-given food with the God-food in "The Bunch of Grapes." In Numbers xiii.23 a cluster of grapes is a sign to the Israelites that they have found the Promised Land, but Herbert, using the biblical grape image, shows that the Christians have a greater gift than the Jews.

But can he want the grape, who hath the wine?
 I have their fruit and more.
 Blessed be God, who prosper'd Noahs vine,
 And made it bring forth grapes good store.
 But much more him I must adore,
 Who of the Laws sowre juice sweet wine did make,
 Ev'n God himself being pressed for my sake.
 (Ll. 22-28.)⁶⁵

Man imbibes the God-stuff for the same reason that he asks God to live within him, to guarantee eternal life. In

⁶⁴p. 37.

⁶⁵p. 128.

"The H. Communion" the combination of the two images, the God-stuff as food for the soul and the man as a house for God, is evidence of their common purpose: "By the way of nourishment and strength/ Thou creep'st into my breast" (ll. 7-8).⁶⁶

The Holy Communion, although it gives the title to only one poem in The Temple, appears in the spiritual food imagery of several more poems. In "The Priesthood" Herbert shows the paradox of Communion.

But th' holy men of God such vessels are,
 As serve him up, who all the world commands:
 When God vouchsafeth to become our fare,
 Their hands convey him, who conveys their hands.
 (Ll. 25-28.)⁶⁷

In "Conscience" the healing qualities of Holy Communion come through a homelier image, when Herbert tells his conscience:

. . . I have physick to expell thee.

And the receipt shall be
 My Saviours bloud: when ever at his board
 I do but taste it, straight it cleanseth me.
 (Ll. 12-15.)⁶⁸

The speaker of "The Banquet" addresses the Communion to welcome it into him and then praises its goodness and power in terms of food imagery.

Thy delight
 Passeth tongue to taste or tell.

⁶⁶p. 52.

⁶⁷p. 161.

⁶⁸pp. 105-06.

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

Or hath sweetnesse in the bread
 Made a head
 To subdue the smell of sinne? (Ll. 5-15.)⁶⁹

In the bread image Herbert achieves a fine and subtle synaesthesia. Whereas the wine image in lines seven through twelve, taken alone, is only a taste image, the bread image is also olfactory because of the imagistically connected words "sweetnesse," "head," and "smell." Although Hutchinson glosses "made a head" as "pressed forward in opposition,"⁷⁰ its connotations and connections here suggest the further image of cooking bread, which both "makes a head" as it rises and produces a "heady" odor. Since the odor of bread cooking--or of fresh bread--is aesthetically and chemically similar to the odor of wine, the sweetness of the bread serves not only as a sensuous image but also as an intellectual connective to bring the wine of the previous stanza into the synaesthetic image. "The Banquet" contains visual, auditory, and touch images not connected with the food imagery, but the single kinesthetic image is a food image. "Wine becomes a wing at

⁶⁹p. 181.

⁷⁰p. 540.

last" (l. 41),⁷¹ Herbert says, suggesting the spiritual uplift of Communion in terms applicable to the physical effect of strong wine. Herbert makes use of all the senses in the imagery of "The Banquet" in order to make concrete the totality of the spiritual effect of Communion. The delight that "passeth tongue to taste or tell" is communicated by the sensuous suggestion in the subtly blended images of "The Banquet." The combination of the two functions of the tongue, "to taste or tell" is a smooth and effective foreshadowing of the synaesthetic effects that in later lines pervade the poem, so that as Herbert is saying that what he is about to express cannot be told, he is preparing his reader to accept expression that goes beyond telling.

"The Invitation," which immediately precedes "The Banquet" in The Temple, is an invitation to mankind to partake of the Holy Communion, and it is more concerned with those who are to participate in the Communion than with the properties of the Communion. The food images, therefore, are not as vivid or as frequent as those in "The Banquet." The Communion food appears in the first two stanzas.

Come ye hither All, whose taste
 Is your waste;
 Save your cost, and mend your fare.

God is here prepar'd and drest,
 And the feast,
 God, in whom all dainties are.

Come ye hither All, whom wine
 Doth define,
 Naming you not to your good:
 Weep what ye have drunk amisse,
 And drink this,
 Which before ye drink is bloud.

(Li. 1-12.)⁷²

Here, there is no actual taste imagery. The food words are general, "fare," "feast," "dainties," and the images of earthly food show it as harmful, in contrast with the healing spiritual food. The tone of "The Banquet" is joyous, but the tone of "The Invitation" is heavy and admonitory. Although the effect of wine is played on pleasantly in "The Banquet," in "The Invitation" the evils of wine appear, "naming you not to your good." Within the Holy Communion is infinite joy, but man goes to it for the most serious of reasons, for the salvation of his soul.

The food imagery is particularly suited to conveying the idea of God as the provider of all, and Herbert takes full advantage of its poetic potential. By food images he shows the pitfalls of base physicality, the providence of God, and absolute love and protectiveness of God. Although he does not deviate from the traditional religious symbolism in most of his food images, Herbert approaches them with his usual attitude of mixed reverence and familiarity and with

⁷²pp. 179-80.

the skill and insight of a metaphysical artist, so that the images have a freshness rarely found in reused traditional metaphors.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Lord I have invited all,
 And I shall
Still invite, still call to thee:
For it seems but just and right
 In my sight,
Where is All, there All should be.
 ("The Invitation," ll. 31-36.)¹

Herbert's household imagery serves three interlocking purposes basic to his poetry: it symbolizes God in concrete ways comprehensible to man; it emphasizes the all-pervasiveness of God; it shows the extent of man's dependence on God. Through the household imagery Herbert communicates his idea of God not as an abstract ideal to be comprehended but as an all-pervading reality to be accepted. In order to show God's all-pervasiveness, however, Herbert had to present some evidence concretely comprehensible to his readers. By showing God as the householder of the universe, the provider of all that is necessary to man, Herbert makes Him concrete through His creation. Yet, Herbert is careful to make his readers understand that God is not entirely invested in creation, that the greatness of God is beyond man's understanding. When the soul enters heaven in "Love (III)," it offers rational arguments against itself, but

¹p. 180.

rationality falls before God's love, which the soul accepts. The image of God as the host offering the ultimate hospitality of heaven is concrete and comprehensible. The reason for God's hospitality, however, is beyond understanding. By accepting the incomprehensible reality of God, as Herbert shows Him, man is acknowledging his utter dependence on God, and it is this full acknowledgment which Herbert attempted to effect in his readers, for the good of their souls.

The intellectual complexity of Herbert's household imagery, like that of most of his poetry, is the intellectual complexity of Anglican dogma, from which he never strays. When he takes a complex bit of theology for a subject, he attempts not to show its obscurity but to clarify it, as he does with transubstantiation in "The H. Communion." The idea that God must dwell in man so that man may dwell in God for eternity is paradoxical, but Herbert accepts it as a normal phenomenon and shows both man and heaven as houses. Herbert, as an orthodox religious poet was concerned with man's soul, not his brain. In the refrain of "The Quip," Herbert says, "But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me."² The answers in The Temple are all God's answers as Herbert saw them through Anglican doctrine and the Bible. His doctrinal interpretations are literal,

²Pp. 110-11.

and much of his imagery, including the house and food imagery, has biblical antecedents. The Bible and Anglican dogma were, however, alive to Herbert, who wrote about them to communicate their vitality and immediacy.

The real complexity of the household imagery is in the emotion and feelings communicated by the images. The beautiful sensuousness of "The Banquet" presents intellectual complexity to the analytic critic, but the devices of the imagery do not have to be understood for the reader to perceive the joy and comfort of the Communion. Man's misery overshadows his unworthiness in the bitter images of "Sepulchre," and through the understated dialogue of "Love (III)" comes a mixture of thankfulness, humility and unspoken understanding that communicates love. The comfort of the chair at the end of "The Pilgrimage" is not an intellectual matter, but a feeling, immediately perceivable, that relieves the weariness built by the rest of the poem. Obviously, Herbert's imagery is meant to allow the reader to perceive intuitively the emotional content of the poems and, thereby, to feel the spiritual closeness of God and the human soul.

As a priest Herbert had to hold God before his parishioners at all times, and as a poet he chose to do the same. He carried on a constant communion with God, sharing all his thoughts and actions with the One Who shared His life-blood with man. All Herbert's poems attest to this

communion, and the household imagery especially, with its emphasis on the everyday presence of God, shows the extent of Herbert's faith. By writing of his relationship with God Herbert established a communion for the sharing of faith between himself and other men. This faith was essential and basic to Herbert, and he expressed it in terms of the essentials of everyday living, the house, the furniture, the food, that serve us all.

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