

ORDER, IDENTITY, AND HARMONY
IN THE RELIGIOUS POETRY
OF CHRISTOPHER SMART

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
David A. Karsgaard
October 1970



ORDER, IDENTITY, AND HARMONY
IN THE RELIGIOUS POETRY
OF CHRISTOPHER SMART

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Until recently "A Song to David" has been considered radically different from Christopher Smart's early poetry. Recent criticism has shown that, though of a higher quality, the "Song" is of a piece with his early work. No satisfactory reason has been given for the excellence of the "Song," however. This study emphasizes the differences between the early and late poetry, and finds the explanation for these differences in Smart's concepts of "identity," and the spirituality of all created things.

During his confinement for madness Smart recorded in Jubilate Agno his thoughts on religion, science, and Nature. These thoughts reveal a Berkeleian belief in the spirituality of the universe. This spirituality means for Smart that all things are of equal importance and praise the One who gave them life. It also means that things can be identical in that the property of one can become the property of another (trees blossom, not with fruit, but with gems). Since things spiritual are

particularly real, all things are real, even words and ideas. This means that words (which are real, i.e. have substance) are the things they represent, and sounds are what they represent (KAAT is cat).

The Seatonian poems were written before these ideas were evolved and articulated. Because of this, and because in them Smart attempts a Miltonic style, the poems are a failure. Images are lost in circumlocution, unnecessary periphrasis abounds, and his favourite devices, catalogue, repetition, and parallelism, are not well used. Nature is viewed within the order of the Great Chain of Being, and its praise of God is lifeless and dead.

Jubilate Agno is Smart's first attempt to put "identity" into practice. The work is incomplete and was not intended for publication, but it does contain lines and even passages of exquisite beauty.

The Hymns and Spiritual Songs exhibits a harmony of structure and theme, although its style is sometimes poor. The inter-play between the natural and the supernatural within the cycle of the Church year and the changing seasons makes it clear that man's (and Nature's) spiritual condition is ultimately what concerns Smart. Both this concern and the delightful descriptions of Nature are made possible by the spirituality of Nature and by "identity."

"A Song to David" is the finest expression of Smart's ideas. Although criticised for being obscure, irrelevant

in places, and too rigidly structured, this study shows that its themes are clear throughout, that all its sections are pertinent to the thematic strains, and that structure, theme, and style merge into one expression. The sweet and strong harmony which results is again made possible by the successful application of the concepts of "identity," and the spirituality of Nature, to structure, theme, and style.

Thus the two basic Smartian problems (the excellence of some of the later poetry within the bulk of the mediocrity of his verse, and the significance and effect of his confinement for madness) are seen as intimately related. The concepts articulated in Jubilate Agno during his confinement help explain the harmony produced in "A Song to David" and Hymns and Spiritual Songs. This study, then, sees Smart's poetry as a progression from order, through "identity," to harmony.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I. DEFINITION.....	7
II. ORDER: THE EARLY RELIGIOUS POETRY.....	16
III. IDENTITY: <u>JUBILATE AGNO</u>	35
IV. HARMONY: <u>HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS</u>	50
V. HARMONY: "A SONG TO DAVID".....	68
CONCLUSION.....	96
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	100

INTRODUCTION

Two problems have confronted every student of Christopher Smart's life and poetry: the brilliance of "A Song to David" within the mediocrity of the bulk of his verse, and the significance and effect of his seven-year confinement for madness. These problems are fundamental. All criticism and all biography must take them both into account, for in Smart's case the critical and the biographical support each other perhaps more than in most cases. However, although everyone has agreed that these questions are basic, the last two hundred years have seen a wide variety of answers and explanations.

The explanations began during Smart's lifetime, finding their way into reviews of his post-confinement poetry. These were not explanations of the brilliance of "A Song to David," but rather explanations of how and why it is so different from, and thus poorer than, his earlier poetry. The reason for the deterioration, it was thought, was Smart's madness. Thus The Monthly Review, though prepared to be fair, did little more than express its pity:

From the sufferings of this ingenious Gentleman,
we could not but expect the performance before us
[A Song to David] to be greatly irregular;

.....

It would be cruel, however, to insist on the slight

defects and singularities of this piece, for many reasons; and more especially if it be true, as we are informed, that it was written when the Author was denied the use of pen, ink, and paper, and was obliged to indent his lines with the end of a key, upon the wainscot.¹

The Critical Review dismissed "A Song to David" as an "extatic song" and "a fine piece of ruins."²

The nineteenth century viewed the problem in a different light, but its explanation was no more satisfactory. Its solution, of course Romantic in nature, stated that the unquestionable excellence of the "Song" resulted from Smart's madness, that it was written in a fit of inspired ecstasy, and that in this way Smart once was enabled to transcend the limiting conventions of his day in which he was before and after pitifully trapped.³ It is a compelling explanation, but its weakness is that it categorizes Smart as the author of a single poem, thus discouraging study of his other work, religious and secular.

The twentieth century has offered a number of different explanations for the two problems, largely in reaction to the Romantic explanation. It has hinted that study of the early secular poetry will raise much

¹The Monthly Review, 1763, quoted in The Collected Poems of Christopher Smart, ed. Norman Callan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), I xlvi-xlvii.

²Ibid., p. xlv.

³See Robert Browning, "Parleyings with Certain People," in The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning (New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1890), VI, 312-318.

of it out of mediocrity;¹ it has stated that, although the "Song" is undoubtedly his masterpiece, "it is of a piece with his other religious verse--finer, stronger, sweeter, but of the same substance."² The most significant contribution of this century, however, has been the 1939 publication of Jubilate Agno,³ a document which was written during Smart's confinement and is thought to be the key to solving the basic problems of Smartian criticism. Perhaps the most fruitful result of that discovery has been Sophia Blaydes' demonstration that, although the eighteenth century could not or would not recognize the fact, Smart's later poetry, and particularly "A Song to David," conform in every important way to eighteenth century poetic theory.⁴

The other results of the discovery of Jubilate Agno have been disappointing, as scholars have chosen to track down Smart's allusions, unravel his puns, trace his sources, and indulge in biographical speculation.⁵ Thus Ainsworth and Noyes evade both of the basic questions:

¹See Donald Davie, The Late Augustans (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958), p. xxviii.

²E. Ainsworth and C. Noyes, Christopher Smart, University of Missouri Studies XVIII, No. 4, (1943), p. 110.

³William Force Stead first edited the manuscript under the title Rejoice in the Lamb (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1939).

⁴Sophia Blaydes, Christopher Smart as a Poet of his Time (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966).

⁵See especially Charles Parish, "Christopher Smart's Knowledge of Hebrew," Studies in Philology, LVIII (1961), 516-532.

In none of these pastoral experiments such as "The Hop-Garden" did Smart's genuine passion for the country and for every form of natural life find that rich and glowing expression in which it was to be clothed in the "Song to David"....Only after sickness, madness, and suffering was he able to "light language straight from thing," [sic] to see all clear, and to maintain a noble strain without a falter.¹

All of which is tantamount to saying nothing. And Arthur Sherbo's recent biography does little more than repeat at length this statement of the obvious.²

Now that the work of Ainsworth, Noyes, and Blaydes has demonstrated that the poet who wrote the Seatonian poems is the same one who wrote "A Song to David," and that the later religious poetry can be placed within the mainstream of eighteenth-century poetics, it is surely safe and perhaps now time to point to the differences between the early and the late religious poetry and thus once again to appreciate Smart's uniqueness. This can certainly be done without repeating the injurious excesses of the past. To rest content with Christopher Smart established comfortably as a typical eighteenth century poet is a mistake as serious as to pigeon-hole him as a madman who wrote one poem.

Robert Browning was the first to point out a certain characteristic of "A Song to David" which distinguishes it

¹Ainsworth and Noyes, op. cit., p. 53.

²Arthur Sherbo, Christopher Smart: Scholar of the University (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967). For a concurring opinion on Sherbo's book see the review by Patricia Spacks, "Wit and Madness," Yale Review, LVII, (1968), 285-290.

from the early religious poetry. "Smart," he said, "...pierced the screen/'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul."¹ In other words, Smart saw and communicated an identity between what a thing actually is and the words which represent that thing. It is quite remarkable that Browning saw this long before the publication of Jubilate Agno, for it is in this work that Smart evolves, articulates and puts into practice this theory of "identity"--that a word is what it represents.

What Browning did not seem to grasp is that this concept is only a part of a much larger theory of "identity" whose poetic application further distinguishes the later from the earlier poetry. This theory, also found in Jubilate Agno, states that all phenomena are spiritually motivated, a fact which has important implications. It means that all Nature is on the same spiritual level, and, in a sense which will be explained in Chapter One, identical. The ordering philosophy of the Seatonian poems, on the other hand, is the Great Chain of Being, a theory which divides all created things into degrees of spiritual importance. This is not to say that the failure of the Seatonian poems is due directly to Smart's use of the Chain (the attempt to imitate Milton shoulders much of the blame for that), but it does mean that much of the uniqueness of his later poetry, uniqueness not found in the earlier work, is due to a new vision of Nature as

¹Browning, op. cit., p. 314.

harmonious, spiritual equality. This larger concept of "identity," which encompasses the "identity" between word and thing, will be defined and discussed in the first chapter, and its application to the theme, style, and structure of the later poetry will emerge in succeeding chapters.

This study, then, finds the clues to explaining the transformation of Smart's poetry in Jubilate Agno. It sees his poetry as a progression from the order of the Seatonian poems, through "identity," to the harmony of "A Song to David," and will attempt to demonstrate this progression in terms of the theme, style, and structure of the religious poetry.

One more thing remains to be said. The study is confined to Smart's religious poetry, and specifically to the Seatonian poems, "Hymn to the Supreme Being," Jubilate Agno, "A Song to David," and Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England. There are several reasons for this: the thematic implications of "identity" are virtually lost in secular poetry, and the judgment of Donald Davie that further study of Smart's secular poetry would raise it to a high level has not been vindicated.¹

¹Davie, op. cit., p. xxviii.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITION

In Fragment B₁ of Jubilate Agno Smart affirms that "...nothing is so real as that which is spiritual."¹ In Smart's view all things are spiritual and so all things are very real. This vision of the spirituality of the created world results in a theory of "identity" whose poetic application helped transform Smart's poetry, particularly stylistically and thematically. It is the purpose of this chapter to reveal the structure upon which this "identity" stands, and also to define its nature. "Identity" does not, of course, finally explain all the differences between Smart's earlier and later poetry, but it does throw some light on the progression from the order of the Seatonian poems to the harmony of "A Song to David."

A good deal of Jubilate Agno is devoted to demonstrating that practically everything, even inanimate objects, even sounds and forces, is spiritual or spirit-filled.

¹Christopher Smart, Jubilate Agno, ed. William Bond (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), B₁ 258. All subsequent quotations from Jubilate Agno are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text by fragment letter and line number.

Here are a few indications of what Smart is saying:

For the warp & woof of flowers are worked by perpetual moving spirits. (B₂ 501)

For the colours are spiritual. (B₂ 651)

For the SUN is an intelligence and an angel of the human form.

For the MOON is an intelligence and an angel in shape like a woman.

For they are together in the spirit every night like man and wife. (B₂ 317-319)

For QUICK-SILVER is spiritual and so is the AIR to all intents and purposes. (B₁ 217)

For the Centripetal and Centrifugal forces are GOD SUSTAINING and DIRECTING. (B₁ 164)

The extended passage on Smart's cat, Jeoffry, is the most illuminating and conclusive:

For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.

For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way. (B₂ 698-699)

For I perceived God's light about him both wax and fire.

For the Electrical fire is the spiritual substance, which God sends from heaven to sustain the bodies both of man and beast. (B₂ 763-764)

In other words, God's spirit is in everything, giving it life and a heightened importance.

In his excellent article on Smart's philosophical and scientific theories, D.J. Greene shows that this concept is very similar to various aspects of Berkeley's thought.¹ Both Smart and Berkeley react against Newtonianism which, in its mechanical explanation of cause and effect, they

¹D.J. Greene, "Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets," Journal of the History of Ideas, XIV, (1953), 327-352.

believe, reduces the importance of the created world. Thus Berkeley also assigns spiritual causes to physical effects: "I say there are no Causes (properly speaking) but Spiritual, nothing active but Spirit... ."1

The other writer who comes to mind is, of course, William Blake:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.²

Although his world-view is perhaps not so well articulated, Smart also saw "a Heaven in a Wild Flower," and saw it years before Blake did.

The fact that Creation is spirit-filled has two important consequences. The first is that all creatures are equal in God's eyes and in Smart's eyes; there are no spiritual degrees. The second is that all created things quite naturally praise the One who gives them life, the One who gives them the capacity to praise. (This "life," of course, erases the conventional distinction between animate and inanimate objects.) All created things praise God, both because they are spirit-filled and because they do so by simply performing their natural functions, by simply existing:

For the flower glorifies God and the root parries
the adversary. (B2 499)

¹As quoted by Greene, ibid., p. 344.

²William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence," Blake: Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), ll. 1-4.

For the ASCENT of VAPOURS is the return of thanksgiving from all humid bodies. (B₁ 208)

This idea finds its finest expression, of course, in the Adoration stanzas of "A Song to David."

The significance of all this is that the universe becomes unified in its praise of the Creator, and Smart feels this unity personally and deeply. Stead stresses the wrong point when he writes: "Coleridge was always exploring the noumenal world with a view to discovering the unifying relations which sustain the whole; Smart saw things only in flashes."¹ Smart may see things "only in flashes," but he certainly sees a unifying element which sustains the whole, and that element is the spirituality of the universe.²

This vision of the spiritual equality of Nature plays a large role in transforming Smart's poetry. He goes on to see an identity between creatures, a mode of perception which is another cause of the uniqueness of his later poetry. Everything in Creation is similar in that all are animated by a spirit, are spiritually equal, and praise God in their existence. However, Smart not only sees objects as similar but sometimes also sees them as possessing the same identity. (It should be noted that at the same time no one glories more in the individual quality of something than does

¹Stead, op. cit., p. 33.

²See Greene, op. cit., pp. 345-346.

Smart.) Consider the following lines:

For the praise of God can give to a mute fish the
notes of a nightingale. (B₁ 24)

Let Ahimaaz rejoice with the Silver-Worm who is a
living mineral. (B₁ 88)

For flowers are musical in ocular harmony. (B₂ 508)

A fish that sings like a bird, a "vile worm that glows,"¹
and flowers arranged in counterpoint; Smart's world is
certainly a marvelous one, a world in which the senses
are so acute that the faculty of one becomes the faculty
of another.² This mode of perception is continued in
"A Song to David," as in it fruit trees bear gems and
rocks gush out honey. (I, LII and LIV)

This is what I mean by "identity" which goes be-
yond unity or similarity. Creation is not only united
in praise, but is also so harmoniously at one in its
praise that the particular function of one creature
(the song of the nightingale) can become the function
of a quite dissimilar creature (the "mute fish").
This "identity" is not to be found in the Seatonian
poems which were written before this concept was articu-
lated, but it is found in "A Song to David" and in the

¹Christopher Smart, "A Song to David," The Collected Poetry of Christopher Smart, ed. Norman Callan (2 vols.; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), I, LXVI. All subsequent quotations from Smart's poetry, excepting Jubilate Agno, are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically by volume number and page or stanza number.

²This occurrence is known as synaesthesia.

Hymns and Spiritual Songs. As succeeding chapters will make clear, "identity" and the spirituality of Nature contribute to the transformation of the themes of Smart's poetry.

Men have always been fascinated by reality and the language used to describe reality. Questions such as "Is one ever able to describe reality accurately?" "By attempting to describe it, and failing, do I change reality itself?" "Is something so because I say it is?" have intrigued western man from Oedipus Rex to Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? And now higher physics has discovered that by measuring something its measurements are altered, and the physicist is back where he began. This is the sort of thing Smart seems to be experimenting with in Jubilate Agno, particularly in the case of his multilingual punning, much of which seems forced and farfetched. Critics resort to words like "dreadful" when Smart baldly states that the English language is concise because it has the characteristics of the dog, which is canis (concise). But this, if dreadful, illustrates Smart's belief that there exists an identity between word and thing which, however tenuous the connection of sound or meaning, is valid nonetheless. (It is so because I say it is.)

This identity follows from the larger concept discussed in the preceding pages. Since everything is spiritual letters are obviously so:

For H is spirit and therefore he is God.
For I is person and therefore he is God. (C 1-2)

For N is novelty and therefore he is God.
 For O is over and therefore he is God.
 For P is power and therefore he is God. (C 6-8)

Since all things spiritual are real, letters are also real,
 and possess their own identity:

For A is the beginning of learning and the door of
 heaven.
 For B is a creature busy and bustling.
 For C is a sense quick and penetrating.
 For D is depth. (B₂ 513-516)

The structure continues to develop, for if letters have
 life, then so must words and sounds:

For a man speaks HIMSELF from the crown of his head
 to the sole of his feet.
 For a LION roars HIMSELF complete from head to tail.
 (B₁ 228-229)

For the VOICE is from the body and the spirit--and
 is a body and a spirit. (B₁ 239)

Thus there exists an identity between word and thing,
 as both word and thing are spiritual and both are real.

Consider the following exercise:

For the power of some animal is predominant in
 every language.
 For the power and spirit of a CAT is in the Greek.
 For the sound of a cat is in the most useful pre-
 position κατ'.
 For the pleasantry of a cat at pranks is in the
 language ten thousand times over.

 For the Greek is thrown from heaven and falls upon
 its feet.
 For the Greek when distracted from the line is
 sooner restored to rank & rallied into some form
 than any other. (B₂ 627-630, 634-635)

Here Smart has moved from noticing that the recurrent
 Greek preposition, κατ', in English is pronounced "kaet"
 --suggesting that the Greek language has properties
similar to those peculiar to cats--to stating that a

Greek (person) is a cat since he falls on his feet when "thrown from heaven." All this is the result of an initial similarity in sounds.

Similar in technique but not so explicit is an exercise which shows that the Romans were brave and hospitable. This is so because the Latin for mouse, a brave and hospitable creature, is "mus," and "-mus" is also the first person plural ending of Latin verbs. Thus the mouse "prevails in the Latin," (B₂ 633) and the Romans are brave and hospitable. And finally in this vein, English is a strong language because "bull," a strong creature, recurs in it in such words as "invisible," "incomprehensible," etc.

Other lines affirm the same identity between word and thing: "For tiger is a word... ." (B₂ 403) and "For the Planet Mercury is the WORD DISCERNMENT." (B₂ 677) In these cases, however, identification is not made on the basis of sound, but probably on the basis of a Masonic or Cabalistic idea. Such repeated identifications, whether obvious or obscure, affect Smart's poetry in recognizable ways.

The most obvious result of this literalness which habitually moves from analogy to identity is preference for metaphor over simile. And when identity so permeates a poet's vision of things, metaphors tend to become less forced, less obvious, more natural and easy. In the following illustration, from "Ash Wednesday, First Day of Lent," the harlot's vice, (greed?) unobtrusively and

insidiously becomes quite literally the harlot herself:

The harlot vice with joy we clasp,
Nor shun to meet her tainted breath;
And leave repentance to the gasp
Of hope-retarded death. (II, 799)

The results of this "identity" will be discussed more fully in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. But first a discussion of the early religious poetry which was written before "identity" influenced Smart's thought and technique.

CHAPTER TWO

ORDER: THE EARLY RELIGIOUS POETRY

In his Introduction to the 1928 edition of Ezra Pound's Selected Poems T.S. Eliot makes some remarks about the creation of poetry which seem pertinent to this study of Christopher Smart. He says that a poet proceeds along two lines; one which represents his technical proficiency and another which represents his development as a human being, his experience:

Now and then the two lines may converge at a high peak, so that we get a masterpiece. That is to say, an accumulation of experience has crystallized to form material of art, and years of work in technique have prepared an adequate medium; and something results in which medium and material, form and content, are indistinguishable.¹

Eliot cautions against applying this theory to all poets, but it does explain why the output of an artist is not of a uniform excellence; and some poets, at least, continually polish their technique in an effort to prepare "an adequate medium." Pope, for example, virtually walked and talked in heroic couplets, and Eliot himself wrote invitations and anniversary congratulations in verse, thus keeping his

¹Ezra Pound, Selected Poems (2d ed.; London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 17-18.

hand in, polishing technique in preparation for the time when the two lines would meet.

Smart was a poet to whom verses came easily and often--he also wrote dinner invitations in verse. One story has it that he penned his first lines at the age of four,¹ and certainly by 1750, the date of the first Seatonian poem, he was adept at many different forms of poetry, stanzaic patterns, and rhythmic formulae. All that Smart lacked was "an accumulation of experience" to cause a meeting of the lines. But the lines do not meet in any of the Seatonian poems nor in the "Hymn to the Supreme Being." This chapter proposes to examine the failure in terms of style, theme, and structure, stressing those weaknesses which the concept of "identity" strengthens in the later poetry.

The style of the Seatonian poems has been universally deplored, and with good reason: in spite of the many attempts, few eighteenth century poems written in imitation of Milton are of any merit. The first lines of "On the Eternity of the Supreme Being," the first Seatonian poem, indicate clearly the Miltonic imitation characteristic of all five poems:

O what can words
The weak interpreters of mortal thoughts,
Or what can thoughts (tho' wild of wing they rove
Thro' the vast Concave of th'aetherial round)

¹As it is related by Moira Dearnley, The Poetry of Christopher Smart (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 12.

If to the Heav'n of Heavens they'd win their way
 Advent'rous, like the birds of night they're lost,
 And delug'd in the flood of dazzling day. (I, 223)

Here are illustrated several of the stylistic failures of these poems. The most obvious results from Smart's decision to use blank verse, a medium he no doubt thought most conducive to his "sublime" subject. (Smart's attempts to achieve "sublimity," incidentally, usually result in poor parodies, with the unique exception of "A Song to David.") His most successful secular poems have regular rhymes and stanzas, both of which Smart could manipulate to good effect,¹ and his most spectacular poetic failure, "The Hop-Garden," is written in blank verse.

To be more specific, Smart's use of blank verse militates against the most fruitful use of three of his most effective technical devices, catalogue, parallelism, and repetition. None of them stands out with the clarity and force it does in poems composed of regular stanzas. Catalogue, for example, is used in the "Song" very effectively when one subject is treated in each stanza. In blank verse there are no stanzas to separate and emphasize, and thus the various parts of the catalogue are not so marked or striking as they might be.² In this passage from "On the Immensity of the Supreme Being" the catalogue

¹See especially "A Morning Piece" (I, 100), "A Noon-Piece" (I, 101), and "A Night-Piece" (I, 103).

²For a detailed discussion of the effectiveness of catalogue when used within a regular stanzaic form, see pp. 73-74.

of gems goes almost unremarked except for the original image of the fiery ruby blushing into flame:

Hence thro' the genial bowels of the earth
Easy may fancy pass; till at thy mines,
Gani, or Raolconda, she arrive,
And from the adamant's imperial blaze
Form weak ideas of her maker's glory.
Next to Pegu or Ceylon let me rove,
Where the rich ruby (deem'd by sages old
Of sovereign virtue) sparkles ev'n like Sirius
and blushes into flames. Thence will I go
To undermine the treasure-fertile womb
Of the huge Pyrenean, to detect
The Agat and the deep-intrenched gem
Of kindred Jasper... . (I, 228-229)

Also, the lack of external discipline in blank verse allows Smart to ramble on in his catalogues, as he does in "On the Goodness of the Supreme Being." (I, 241-242) In the "Song" on the other hand, regular stanzas and the self-imposed regimen of stanzaic groups of three's and seven's provide a framework within which Smart works most effectively.¹

Repetition, when used in succeeding lines, can be a potent device for impressing a statement on the reader's consciousness, as illustrated by these two lines from "On the Power of the Supreme Being":

'Tis Thy terrific voice, Thou God of power,
'Tis Thy terrific voice; all Nature hears it.
(I, 236)

But when the repeated lines are removed some distance from the first ones, the effect of the repetition is dulled, as it is almost lost in the paragraphs of blank verse. This

¹For an explanation of the organization of the "Song" see pp. 76-77.

passage from "On the Goodness," which Sophia Blaydes claims is one of the best in the Seatonian poems,¹ illustrates the point:

'O all-sufficient, all beneficent,
 Thou God of goodness and of glory, hear!
 Thou, who to lowliest minds dost condescend,
 Assuming passions to enforce thy laws,
 Adopting jealousy to prove thy love:
 Thou, who resign'd humility uphold,
 Ev'n as the florist props the drooping rose,
 But quell tyrannic pride with peerless pow'r,
 Ev'n as the tempest rives the stubborn oak,
 O all-sufficient, all-beneficent,
 Thou God of goodness and of glory, hear!
 Bless all mankind, and bring them in the end
 To Heav'n, to immortality, and THEE!' (I, 244)

The repetition of the first two lines does not go un-remarked, but it is weak in comparison with the eye-catching effect of the repetition of "And was it He,..." in the first line of three successive stanzas of "The Crucifixion of Our Blessed Lord." (II, 805)

The best use of parallelism in the Seatonian poems is these lines from "On the Goodness":

Assuming passions to enforce thy laws,
 Adopting jealousy to prove thy love. (I, 244)

But a parallel is held together and even tightened when the two lines rhyme, as in this illustration from the "Song":

Foremost to give the Lord his dues,
 Foremost to bless the welcome news,
 And foremost to condole. (I, VII)

All of this goes to show that, while the major techniques of the later poetry are employed in these poems, their

¹Blaydes, op. cit., p. 81.

effectiveness is blunted when Smart uses them in conjunction with blank verse.

The relative ineffectiveness of these techniques is not entirely due to the choice of the medium of blank verse, however. It is also due to Smart's volubility and periphrastic style, as the continual use of needless repetition and qualifying parenthesis could bury any technique. The following illustration is taken from one of the better Seatonian poems, "On the Immensity."

Yet Thou art there, yet God himself is there
 Ev'n on the bush (tho' not as when to Moses
 He shone in burning Majesty reveal'd)
 Nathless conspicuous in the linnet's throat
 Is his unbounded goodness--Thee her Maker,
 Thee her Preserver chants she in her song;
 While the all emulative vocal tribe
 The grateful lesson learn--no other voice
 Is heard, no other sound--for in attention
 Buried, ev'n babbling Echo holds her peace.

(I, 229-230)

Here no attempt is made to be concise, and the reference to Moses, if nothing else, is surely unnecessary.

The actual diction of this volubility, heavily latinate and often tortuous, is also distracting, at least for the modern reader:

O thrice-illustrious! were it not for thee [the sun]
 Those pansies, that reclining from the bank,
 View through th'immaculate, pellucid stream
 Their portraiture in the inverted heaven,
 Might as well change their triple boast, the white,
 The purple, and the gold... . ("On the Goodness,"
 I, 241)

The simple picture of pansies seeing their reflection in the water is burdened by "immaculate," and "pellucid," and unnecessarily complicated by the description of the

reflection: they view "their portraiture in the inverted heaven." Compare this with the simple, lovely way Smart conveys the glory of the lily in "St. Philip and St. James":

Beeches, without order seemly,
Shade the flow'rs of annual birth,
And the lily smiles supremely
Mention'd by the Lord on earth. (II, 814)

Many of Smart's adjectives and epithets are unoriginal and obvious. The sun is the "illustrious monarch of the day," the moon is the "fair queen of night," and Urania is "divine." In the "Song," on the other hand, there is no hint of cliché, and the descriptions are more concrete: the sun is now dressed in "his saffron robe," and the moon is "clad in a silver globe." (I, XXXIV) It is the exalted yet tired diction of the Seatonian poems which the concept of the identity between word and thing transforms.

Smart's interest in words and his fascination with their sound, however, is obvious throughout these poems. One can imagine the delight he would take in the five-syllable roll of "irrefragable":

Illustrious name, irrefragable proof
Of man's vast genius, and the soaring soul!
("On the Omniscience," I, 233)

Sometimes an attempt at onomatopoeia is made, as in the following passage where the harsh consonants attempt to echo the terrible scene being described. God

Triumphs his mining vengeance in th'uproar
Of shatter'd towers, riven rocks, and mountains,
With clamour inconceivable uptorn,
And hurl'd adown th'abyss. Sulphureous pyrites

Bursting abrupt from darkness into day,
 With din outrageous and destructive ire
 Augment the hideous tumult... . ("On the Power,"
 I, 237-238)

This love of words, however, more often amounts to nothing but semantic awkwardness and even tortuousness.¹ Part of the reason for this is the attempt to create an exalted tone to match his exalted subject. His secular poems, not so encumbered, more often employ just the right latinate word, as in the light, mocking fable "The Country Squire and the Mandrake":

Wond'ring, he ponder'd, stooping low
 (Trelooby always lov'd a show)
 And on the Mandrake's vernal station,
 Star'd with prodigious observation. (I, 56)

The ponderous effort of "prodigious observation" hits precisely the right, lightly satirical, note. But even the diction of the secular poems is far removed from the simple, clear, unadorned and unaffected diction of the "Song" and of the Hymns. Although at this point he exhibits a sensitivity to language, its sound and function, Smart has not yet formulated the theory which is to transform his diction.

Smart also uses imagery to attempt to achieve a tone which complements his subject, but he is defeated both by the nature of the imagery and by the circumlocution which clothes it. The time taken to describe the power of God's voice effectively negates any force the

¹See the discussion above, pp. 21-22, on the description of the pansies.

comparison may otherwise have had:

Shou'd ocean to his congreteated waves
 Call in each river, cataract, and lake,
 And with the watery world down a huge rock
 Fall headlong in one horrible cascade,
 'Twere but the echo of the parting breeze,
 When Zephyr faints upon the lilly's breast,
 'Twere but the ceasing of some instrument,
 When the last ling'ring undulation
 Dies on the doubting ear, if nam'd with sounds
 So mighty! so stupendous! so divine! ("On the Power,"
 I, 237)

Earlier in the same poem Smart writes:

Behold! quakes Apenine, behold! recoils
 Athos, and all the hoary-headed Alps
 Leap from their bases at the godlike sound. (I, 237)

The image these lines create, in my mind at least, is the
 ludicrous one of a number of old women leaping in fright
 off their chairs!

It was quite conventional to apostroph^{ph}ize Nature in
 the eighteenth century, and Smart does it frequently,
 almost always in the same exalted, distant tone:

Ye rocks, that mock the raving of the floods,
 And proudly frown upon th'impatient deep,
 Where is your grandeur now? Ye foaming waves,
 That all along th'immense Atlantic roar,

 Ye mountains, on whose cloud-crown'd tops the
 cedars
 Are lessen'd into shrubs... . ("On the Eternity,"
 I, 225)

This sort of address, which verges on pomposity, seems to
 create a barrier, or at least puts a distance, between
 Smart and Nature. The point is made because the barrier
 does not exist in the later poetry. Of course it would
 not, because by then Smart has a deeper reverence for, and
 appreciation of, the spirituality, importance, and beauty

of Nature.

Although I am certainly creating that impression, it is wrong to suppose that the Seatonian poems are a uniform failure. In the conclusion of "On the Immensity," for example, alliteration and parallelism are used quite well:

Yet man at home, within himself, might find
The Deity immense, and in that frame
So fearfully, so wonderfully made,
See and adore his providence and pow'r--
I see, and I adore--O God most bounteous!
O infinite of Goodness and of Glory!
The knee, that Thou hast shap'd shall bend
to Thee,
The tongue, which Thou has tun'd shall chant
thy praise,
And thine own image, the immortal soul,
Shall consecrate herself to Thee for ever. (I, 230-
231)

The alliteration of "g's" with "God," "Goodness," and "Glory," the parallel of man seeing and adoring with Smart himself seeing and adoring, and the parallel between the line on the knee and that on the tongue: these devices help to produce a reasonably good conclusion to the poem, though of course it is not so powerful as that of the "Song."

"On the Goodness," perhaps the best poem in the series, gives a hint of the direct simplicity characteristic of the post-confinement poetry:

Hail to the chearful rays of ruddy morn,
That paint that streaky East, and blithsome rouse
The birds, the cattle, and mankind from rest!
Hail to the freshness of the early breeze,
And Iris dancing on the new-fall'n dew! (I, 421)

The image of Iris dancing lightly in the morning light is

a delightful, refreshing one. All through his poetry Smart is consistently more successful with the "light" touch than with the serious or pontifical approach.

These poems also contain a few examples of the compression which characterizes his later poetry. This compression most often takes the form of a descriptive clause which has been telescoped into a participial phrase, as in "night-exploding bird," and "dust-directed...thought." For the most part, however, circumlocution takes precedence over compression and simple clarity.

In one place Smart gives a hint of the later tendency to view something within an unfamiliar frame of reference, the tendency which is one of the causes of the distinctive nature of the later poetry:

Behold! behold! th'unplanted garden round
Of vegetable coral, sea-flow'rs gay,
And shrubs of amber from the pear-pav'd bottom
Rise richly varied, where the finny race
In blithe security their gambols play. ("On the
Immensity," I, 228)

The sea as garden: it is not startling, and hardly unconventional, but it is indicative of things to come.

The question of the themes of the Seatonian poems as they relate to those of the later religious poetry is a complicated one. The primary theme of all five poems is the demonstration of, and praise for, the attributes of the Almighty, and the supporting theme of every poem is gratitude to God for all his works. These and other related themes have a familiar ring to those who know

Jubilate Agno, "A Song to David," and the Hymns and Spiritual Songs. The ideas are so similar, in fact, that Francis Adams claims the only difference is that between mere intellectual assent in the Seatonian poems, and deep emotional belief in the later poetry.¹ Here are a few random quotations illustrating the themes of these poems:

Hail, wond'rous Being, who in pow'r supreme
Exists from everlasting, whose great Name
Deep in the human heart, and every atom
The Air, the Earth or azure Main contains,
In undecypher'd characters is wrote--
INCOMPREHENSIBLE! ("On the Eternity," I, 223)

List ye! how Nature with ten thousand tongues
Begins the grand thanksgiving, Hail, all hail.
("On the Immensity," I, 227)

It is the hand in Nature
Of God himself--for God himself is there.
("On the Immensity," I, 229)

And thou, cherubic Gratitude, whose voice
To pious ears sounds silverly so sweet.
("On the Omniscience," I, 231)

Then join the general chorus of all worlds,
And let the song of charity begin
In strains seraphic, and melodious pray'r.
("On the Goodness," I, 244)

The diction cannot obscure the fact that the greater and lesser themes of the later religious poetry are all here, seemingly unchanged. But simply "deep emotional belief"² and a rejuvenated diction could not transform this dullness into excellence. The inferior "Hymn to the Supreme Being," apparently composed in deep emotional belief,

¹Francis Adams, "The Major Religious Poems of Christopher Smart," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII (1966), 196A.

²Ibid.

is proof of that. There must be another factor, and that factor is part of the thesis of this study. Smart discarded the spiritual degrees of the Great Chain of Being, breathed a vital spiritual equality into Nature, immeasurably heightening its importance, and thus acquired the personal "experience" (in Eliot's terms) necessary for the creation of great poetry.

A completely different light is shed upon the above quotations when it is noted that the idea of the Great Chain of Being is both explicitly stated and implicitly the basis of the philosophy of the Seatonian poems. The "lordly lion" rules the animals, the eagle is the "king of birds," the oak stands in "regal solitude," while

...Leviathan
The terror and the glory of the main
His pastime takes with transport, proud to see
The ocean's vast dominion all his own.
("On the Immensity," I, 228)

Some creatures, then, are closer to God, are more important, than others. Thus there cannot be the absolute unity, which I am calling "identity," which is found in Jubilate Agno. Nature praises, yes, but not in equality, and the praise is dead. Although the presence of God is said to be in all, the omnipresence, reality and immediacy of the indwelling spirit of Jubilate Agno is missing. Compare the statement, "...it is the hand/Of God himself--for God himself is there," ("On the Immensity," I, 229) with the following:

For the letter ^h which signifies GOD by himself is on the fibre of some leaf in every Tree.

For ♪ is the grain of the human heart & on the network of the skin.
 For ♪ is in the veins of all stones both precious and common.
 For ♪ is upon every hair both of man and beast.
 (B₂ 477-480)

And so it goes. There is a qualitative difference here which is not explained solely by a sudden deepening of belief. God's attributes (goodness, power, omniscience, etc.) are manifest in Nature, and thus, by extension, God is, but Nature is not imbued with the spirituality it has in Jubilate Agno. Thus the loving attention Smart pays to each individual object in his later poetry is absent in these poems simply because it does not have the importance, spiritual importance it is later given. For all its praising, Nature in the Seatonian poems is, in a sense, lifeless: the spirit which enlivens and identifies is missing.

Furthermore, man stands at the head of Creation, distinguished by possession of a soul and thus in special communion with God:

The tongue, which Thou has tun'd, shall chant thy
 praise,
 And thine own image, the immortal soul,
 Shall consecrate herself to Thee for ever.
 ("On the Immensity," I, 231)

O he is good, he is immensely good!
 Who all things form'd, and form'd them all for
 man.
 ("On the Goodness," I, 242)

The emphasis in the Seatonian poems, then, is on the nature of the Almighty as revealed by Nature, and on man's special relationship to God. Thus, although Smart looks at Nature, he does not really see it, as his

orientation is towards God and man. In the "Song" the orientation is still ostensibly towards God and man (David), but Smart's vision of Nature is a new one, and Nature becomes vividly real, important for its own sake, and no longer a mere illustration or object lesson.

Here an important point should be made. The subjects for the poems were assigned, Smart did not choose them. These are not spontaneous effusions; Smart wrote the poems largely for the money and prestige involved. This is not to say that the sentiments expressed are not his or that he was in any way intellectually dishonest, but it does add weight to the contention that the poems express beliefs held only intellectually and not emotionally. Adams' point is valid even though it does not tell the whole story.

It might be objected that there is a passage in the "Song" which indicates that Smart still sees things in terms of degree. The section on the subjects of David's poetry begins with God, continues with angels, man, the world etc., and finishes with gems. (I, XVIII-XXVI) Several points, however, seem pertinent here. Although Smart does proceed from the large (the world) to the small (gems), there is no indication that the subject of one stanza is somehow intrinsically more worthwhile than that of a following one, or that the further one goes down the line the less spiritual things become. Thus, rather than being a catalogue of things of decreasing spiritual

importance, it seems to be simply a convenient way of grouping the topics.

Also, the idea that certain plants or animals rule over their fellows (the eagle, for instance, over the birds) is not found in the "Song." The emphasis, in contradistinction to that of the Seatonian poems, is on the spiritual equality of Nature. There are still differences in Nature, of course, (the lion is stronger than the horse, the moon is more beautiful than a flowery garden) and Smart rejoices in them, but difference is not degree. Since man is formed in the image of God he does hold a unique position, but the point is that Smart abolishes the degrees of the Seatonian poems when he writes of Nature in the "Song."

At least one important amendment should be made to my treatment of the themes of the Seatonian poems as an undifferentiated whole: they were, after all, written over a span of six years. "On the Goodness of the Supreme Being" gives the first hint of a developing emotional belief, a belief which involves Smart personally. The hint is given in connection with the first indication of Smart's developing concern and identification with the ideal Christian hero in the form of David (Orpheus):

ORPHEUS, for so the Gentiles call'd thy name,
Israel's sweet psalmist, who alone could wake
Th'inanimate to motion; who alone
The joyful hillocks, the applauding rocks,
And floods with musical persuasion drew;

.....
--in this breast
Some portion of thy genuine spirit breathe.

And lift me from myself; each thought impure
 Banish; each low idea raise, refine,
 Enlarge, and sanctify. (I, 240-241)

Of course Smart has referred to himself before, but only in conventional, impersonal ways--appeals to the muse, praise to God, etc. The tone of the request to "lift me from myself" takes us into another world altogether. This hint of emotional involvement in "On the Goodness" becomes the basis of the "Hymn to the Supreme Being," but the involvement does not make either poem a great one.

The structure of the Seatonian poems is, in every case, similar and simple. In each case the demonstration of an attribute of God manifested in Creation is followed by a hymn of praise or by a prayer. (In "On the Power" the hymn is placed in the middle of the poem.) Smart indicated this division himself in one of his lines in "On the Immensity":

I gladly join your Mattins, and with you [birds]
 Confess his presence, and report his praise.
 (I, 227)

This simple patterning of structure on theme foreshadows the more complex unity of form and content in Smart's best poems. Even the complexity of the "Song" is based in one way or another on this division between demonstrating God's presence and reporting his praise.

The "Hymn to the Supreme Being," although a poor poem, is notable for two reasons; the personal note sounded as part of the thematic strain, and the return to regular stanzas after the blank verse of the Seatonian poems.

Stylistically, however, it is no improvement over the earlier poems.

The theme of the poem is enlarged, as two dimensions are added. The first is the personal expression of gratitude to God for restoring him to life:

But soul-rejoicing health again returns,
 The blood meanders gentle in each vein,
 The lamp of life renew'd with vigour burns,
 And exil'd reason takes her seat again--
 Brisk leaps the heart, the mind's at large once
 more,
 To love, to praise, to bless, to wonder and
 adore. (I, 246)

This gratitude leads Smart to vow:

Deeds, thoughts, and words no more his mandates
 break,
 But to his endless glory work, conceive, and
 speak. (I, 247)

The second dimension is the emergence of "Charity" (which was mentioned only in passing in the Seatonian poems) as a major theme:

Thus in high heaven charity is great,
 Faith, hope, devotion hold a lower place;
 On her the cherubs and the seraphs wait,
 Her, every virtue courts, and every grace;
 See! on the right, close by th'Almighty's throne,
 In him she shines confest, who came to make her
 known. (I, 247-248)

These emotional feelings of gratitude and charity, which indicate a deep personal belief in God, his immanence and loving care, are necessary to the creation of Smart's best poetry.¹ But the fact that emotional belief is not the only factor which contributes to the change

¹See the discussion on p. 27 of Adams' suggestion that personal belief transforms Smart's poetry.

of Smart's poetry is well demonstrated by this particular poem, which ought to be a fine one, but is not. Even the use of regular stanzas in place of blank verse is no help, as Smart does not use the repetition and parallelism which may have helped unify the poem. This catalogue, based on the Chain, is as conventional and lifeless as similar ones in the Seatonian poems:

Give me 'mongst gems the brilliant to behold;
 O'er Flora's flock imperial is the rose;
 Above all birds the sov'reign eagle soars;
 And monarch of the field the lordly lion roars.
 (I, 247)

In all fairness it should be said that at one point catalogue is used effectively, as here the lines are balanced yet varied, and the metaphor in the last line is a good one:

He rais'd the lame, the lepers he made whole,
 He fix'd the palsied nerves of weak decay,
 He drove out Satan from the tortur'd soul,
 And to the blind gave or restor'd the day.
 (I, 246)

Thus a lyric form and emotional belief do not by themselves explain the excellence of "A Song to David." But the "Hymn to the Supreme Being" is nonetheless a step in the right direction, a step towards Jubilate Agno.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTITY: JUBILATE AGNO

The seminal importance of Jubilate Agno to this study was revealed in Chapter One, where it was shown that, inasmuch as the work can be regarded as a notebook or journal, it records Smart's theories about language, Nature, and man; theories which fit together in a single, coherent world-view. However, inasmuch as Jubilate Agno is also a poem, it puts those theories into practice, and it is the purpose of this chapter to look at the practice.

Smart had a personal plan to revise the liturgy of the Church of England, a revision which was to help bring true religion back to the island.¹ Most of the poetic activity of his second confinement for madness was directed towards that revision: the Psalms were translated into meter for use in public worship, and the Hymns and Spiritual Songs were composed to complement the use of the Prayer Book. Jubilate Agno probably originally figured somewhere in this plan, as "...the title and peroration

¹Bond, op. cit., p. 20. For a full discussion of Smart's militant, religious patriotism, see Albert Kuhn, "Christopher Smart: The Poet as Patriot of the Lord," Journal of English Literary History, XXX, (1963), 121-136.

are so closely parallel to portions of the Order for Morning Prayer and the Psalter."¹

The structure of the poem seems to be derived from Smart's notions of the antiphonal character of Hebrew psalms, notions which appear to have been taken from Bishop Lowth's lectures on the subject, De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum.² With the exception of the first two lines, the poem is divided into "Let" lines and "For" lines. Although over half the poem is missing, Bond has demonstrated that in the original every "Let" line was probably followed by a "For" line in the following manner:

Let Elizur rejoice with the Partridge, who is a
prisoner of state and is proud of his keepers.
For I am not without authority in my jeopardy,
which I derive inevitably from the glory of the
name of the Lord. (B₁ 1)

The most obvious parallel in the Bible is Ps. 136 in which the refrain "for his mercy endureth forever" is repeated in every verse throughout the psalm. This simple yet rigid structure to some extent parallels that of the Seatonian poems. The report of God's praise is found in every "Let" verse, as some one person praises him with an object from Nature: "Let Eunice rejoice with Oculata who is of the Lizard kind." (B₁ 284) The confession of his presence is found directly or indirectly in most "For" verses: "For LIGHT is propagated at all

¹Bond, op. cit., p. 20.

²Ibid.

distances in an instant because it is actuated by the divine conception." (B₁ 284) The rigidity of this structure seems to be evidence of Smart's concern with strictness of form, a concern most manifest in "A Song to David" and the Hymns and Spiritual Songs.

Recently, however, critics have begun to see the structure of the poem more in terms of its patterns of puns, allusions and associations, and less in terms of the "Let" and "For" verses. Thomas Teevan claims that "...the associational devices in the poem appear to be major structural ones,"¹ and Moelwyn Merchant sees the poem largely in terms of three major "patterns of reference."² There are the playfully witty puns, the complicated linguistic puns involving English, Old English, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the even more complicated scriptural references and allusions. He concludes by stating, "the whole disorganized poem is traversed by these patterns of allusion, association, and reference, which depend on a wealth of learning, linguistic, and traditional."³ This sort of discussion blurs the distinction between structure and style, but it does seem to indicate that the simple structural rigidity of the poem is not so simple nor so

¹Thomas F. Teevan, "A Study of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno," Dissertation Abstracts, XVIII, (1958), 224-225.

²W. Moelwyn Merchant, "Patterns of Reference in Smart's Jubilate Agno," Harvard Library Bulletin, XIV, (1960), 20-26.

³Ibid., p. 26.

rigid.¹ In this way the poem is seen to be a stage between the structural simplicity of the Seatonian poems and the complexity of the "Song."

In any case, not too much can be learned from the structure of the poem, or too much applied to the purpose of this study. The poem is incomplete, "...ended as a device with little purpose beyond recording the passage of time, as mechanical as the notches on Crusoe's stick,"² and was not meant for publication. More, however, can be said and claimed for its style and theme.

Smart's theory of identity between word and thing, a theory which was the culmination of a life-long fascination with language, produced lines of poetry unlike anything he had formerly written:

For the SHADOW is of death, which is the Devil,
who can make false and faint images of the
works of Almighty God.

For every man beareth death about him ever since
the transgression of Adam, but in perfect light
there is no shadow.

For all Wrath is Fire, which the adversary blows
upon and exasperates.

¹Another interpretation of the form of Jubilate Agno has recently been suggested by R.P. Fitzgerald, "The Form of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno," Studies in English Literature, VIII, (1968), 487-499. Briefly, he suggests that the "Let" and "For" lines are unrelated (they are written on separate sheets), that each "Let" line was later to form the core of a stanza in a hymn of praise, and that the "For" lines are more correctly described as a journal than as antiphonal responses. The "Song" was written after Smart abandoned the idea of using the "Let" lines for his hymn. This theory is not completely convincing, however. It is reasonably certain, for instance, that the "Song" was written sometime during the composition of Fragments A, B₁, and B₂. (See Sherbo, op. cit., p. 156.)

²Bond, op. cit., p. 21.

For SHADOW is a fair Word from God, which is not
 returnable till the furnace comes up.
 For the ECLIPSE is of the adversary--blessed be the
 name of Jesus for Whisson of Trinity.
 For the shadow is his and the penumbra is his and
 his the perplexity of the phenomenon.
 For the eclipses happen at times when the light is
 defective.
 For the more the light is defective, the more the
 powers of darkness prevail. (B₂ 308-315)

The ideas here are all conventional enough--the Devil as death and the absence of light, yet Shadow being a part of God's Creation, not to be destroyed until the last days--but the literal, matter-of-fact quality of the statement is quite unique. There are no similes here, and the metaphors convey absolute identity: "For all Wrath is Fire."

The direct, sometimes biblical language ("in perfect light there is no shadow") has led at least one critic to state that Smart is trying to imitate the concrete diction and compressed syntax of Hebrew poetry even as he is imitating its structure.¹ But for years Smart had been trying to imitate the concreteness and conciseness of Pope and Virgil,² and repeated emphasis on his indebtedness to Hebrew poetry is only a smokescreen which obscures his own, original, poetic ability. Smart's

¹R.D. Saltz, "'Scope for Wonder and for Love': The Religious Poetry of Christopher Smart," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII, (1967), 2694A-2695A.

²"Oh! had I Virgil's comprehensive strain,
 Or sung like Pope, without a word in vain."
 ("Epithalamium," I, 200)

See also Patricia Spacks, The Poetry of Vision (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 156.

concern with language, amply illustrated in Jubilate Agno, finally results in his theory of "identity" which has far more to do with the transformation of his poetry than does any imitation of the poetry of David. The results of the experimentation with the theory, as this and following chapters illustrate, lend credence to this view.

Direct equation, which admittedly often is no more than bald statement and therefore hardly poetry, is thus one of the distinguishing features of the style of Jubilate Agno. In "On the Power of the Supreme Being" Smart writes in grandiose language of thunder and lightning as manifestations of God's power and glory. Here he simply, yet powerfully, states,

For THUNDER is the voice of God direct in verse
and musick.

For LIGHTNING is a glance of the glory of God.
(B₁ 271-272)

Identity has taken the place of analogy, as it has in these lines taken from the celebrated passage on Jeoffry:

For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by
brisking about the life.

For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the
sun loves him.

For he is of the tribe of Tiger.

For the Cherub Cat is a term of the Angel Tiger.
(B₂ 722-725)

The last line is especially interesting. Smart says, in his typically telescoped way, that the Cat is of the order of Tiger even as the Cherub is of the order of Angel. But his mathematical terminology is stronger than my paraphrase, and is more like this. Cherub:Angel::Cat:Tiger.

Language could hardly be more compressed or more simple than it is in these lines:

Let Hushim rejoice with the King's Fisher, who
is of royal beauty, tho' plebian size.
For in my nature I quested for beauty, but God,
God hath sent me to sea for pearls. (B₁ 30)

The response here is particularly fine, as in a few words Smart says that whereas in his natural state he tried to find meaning in the search for external beauty, God's purpose is that he find meaning in discovering the more beautiful pearls of the inner life.¹ The clever substitution of the concrete "pearls" for the abstract "beauty" highlights the contrast.

Smart's desire to communicate precisely and concretely the nature of what he sees is revealed in his unusual use of common words. For example, "prank" and "camel," both nouns, strikingly become verbs in these lines:

For it (rain water) will ascend in a stream two
thirds of the way and afterwards prank itself into
ten thousand agreeable forms. (B₁ 210)

For he (Jeoffry) camels his back to bear the first
notion of business. (B₂ 756)

Everyone has seen a cat arch ("camel") her back, and "prank itself" adds a delightful touch to the description of a fountain reaching its apex and dissolving into a delicate spray.

Parallelism and repetition were not used very effectively in the Seatonian poems, nor were they used

¹This line may refer to the "pearl of great price," Matt. 13:46.

often. In this poem, however, Smart is continually experimenting with their various uses, raising the suspicion that in this respect the style is strongly influenced by Hebrew poetry. Psalm 24, for example, combines both devices, as the initial clauses are repeated, and the second halves of the first two verses are paralleled in the second halves of the last two verses:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up
ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall
come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and
mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up,
ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall
come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is
the King of glory. (6-10)

The same combination of parallelism and repetition is used in this passage from Jubilate Agno:

Let Elon rejoice with Attelabus, who is the Locust
without wings.

For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I had
the grace to obey the voice of Christ in my con-
science.

Let Jaheel rejoice with the Woodcock, who liveth
upon suction and is pure from his diet.

For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I was
willing to run all hazards for the sake of the
name of the Lord.

Let Shuni rejoice with the Gull, who is happy in not
being good for food.

For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I was
willing to be called a fool for the sake of Christ.

(B₁ 49-51)

No amount of parallelism or repetition could unify Jubilate Agno, but it will be demonstrated in the following two chapters how Smart uses these same devices to unify the poems in the Hymns as well as the "Song." In this way will be established the vital significance of the experimentation

in Jubilate Agno.

Catalogue is the most obvious stylistic characteristic of the poem. The "Let" lines, in fact, are simply one long catalogue of men and created things praising God. The important point about this catalogue is that Smart attempts to include all created things in it, and although he is doomed to failure, he succeeds in a sense because his intention is clear. And this all-inclusive catalogue is the result of his new vision of all Nature existing on the same spiritual level. Hence the inclusion of ugly and apparently insignificant creatures:

Let Tola bless with the Toad, which is the good
creature of God, tho' his virtue is in the secret,
and his mention is not made. (A 29)

Let Boaz, the Builder of Judah, bless with the
Rat, which dwelleth in hardship and peril, that
they may look to themselves and keep their houses
in order. (A 33)

Let Cornelius with the Swine bless God, which pur-
ifyeth all things for the poor. (A 63)

Smart has long since discarded the sentiments of the "Hymn to the Supreme Being," in which he had written: "Give me 'mongst gems the brilliant to behold." (I, 247) In the "Song," where the praise of the best of men would seem to call for the presence of the rulers of the created world (gold, the rose, the eagle, the lion), Smart includes the mundane beaver, and then on the same level as the mighty tiger. (I, XXV)

The style of Jubilate Agno, then, is affected by Hebrew poetry and by Smart's concept of "identity."

Hebrew poetry influences his use of parallelism and repetition, the idea of the identity of word and thing helps transform his diction and imagery, and the concept of the spiritual equality of created things influences the nature of his catalogue.

The primary theme of Jubilate Agno is praise: "Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together." (A 3) The supporting theme is gratitude: "For there is no invention but the gift of God, and no grace like the grace of gratitude." (B₁ 82) These two themes imply and suggest a host of minor themes with which Smart deals to a greater or lesser extent, including charity, chastity, God's presence in Nature, salvation, the ideal Christian hero, music, and obedience. Most of these were present in the Seatonian poems, but the treatment they receive here is quite different.

The theme of praise is enlarged in scope:

Rejoice, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord
and the Lamb.

Nations, and languages, and every Creature, in which
is the breath of Life. (*Italics mine*) (A 1-2)

Smart attempts to bring literally all of Creation into the chorus of praise as he lists the names of hundreds of members of the animal, mineral, and vegetable worlds, using natural history books, obituaries,¹ and his own considerable memory. It is an impressive performance, far removed from the relative generality of the Seatonian poems.

¹See Sherbo, op. cit., p. 144.

With the clause "in which is the breath of life" we move even farther from the world of the Seatonian poems. The world of Jubilate Agno is spirit-filled, mineral and vegetable as well as animal, and this fact renders it very precious to Smart. The point is not merely that the degrees of the Great Chain of Being have been discarded in favour of a simple equality, but that everything has been raised to the same high level of spirituality. And this spirituality adds a calm reality to the praise quite unlike the hearty yet lifeless rejoicing of the Seatonian poems. The difference is obvious in the two following passages:

List ye! how Nature with ten thousand tongues
Begins the grand thanksgiving, Hail, all hail,
Ye tenants of the forest and the field!
My fellow subjects of th'eternal King,
I gladly join your Mattins, and with you
Confess his presence, and report his praise.
("On the Immensity," I, 227)

For the Lord made a Nosegay in the meadow with his
disciples & preached upon the lily.
For the angels of God took it out of his hand and
carried it to the Height.

.....
For there is no Height in which there are not
flowers.

For flowers have great virtues for all the senses.
For the flower glorifies God and the root parries
the adversary.

For the flowers have their angels even the words
of God's Creation. (B₂ 494-495, 497-500)

The entire point of view has changed: before he was looking up, now he is looking around him. This brings to light the apparent paradox that, even as Smart sees all as one in praise, he is vitally concerned with the individual, with its superficial beauty as well as with its deeper meaning.

In fact, beauty and meaning become one, as an object glorifies God (which action gives it its meaning) by simply existing and being beautiful. A thing's beauty is its meaning, and its meaning is its beauty, and to say Smart emphasizes one or the other is to miss an important point. Thus the inclusion of ugly creatures in this hymn of praise¹ is significant. Their beauty is found in their meaning (which is to glorify God by simply existing), so all things are beautiful and meaningful.

Music is an important thematic strain in Jubilate Agno even as it is in "On the Goodness of the Supreme Being." The power, function, and scope of music, however, are here considerably increased, as John Friedman in his lucid article on Jubilate Agno demonstrates.² The Almighty, Friedman claims, plays the Creation into being on his heavenly harp:

For GOD the father Almighty plays upon the HARP of
stupendous magnitude and melody.
For innumerable Angels fly out at every touch and
his tune is a work of creation.
For at that time malignity ceases and the devils
themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man by a remarkable
stillness and serenity of soul. (B₁ 246-249)

The function of the poet-psalmist-singer, Smart-David-Orpheus, is to lead all of Creation in a chorus which complements God's music, and thus reproduce the harmony

¹See the discussion above on p. 43.

²John B. Friedman, "The Cosmology of Praise: Smart's Jubilate Agno," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXXXII, (1967), 250-256.

already present in the universe. This is why Smart catalogues the names of so many creatures: literally every thing, however unmusical or ugly, has its rightful place in this chorus.

Whereas in "On the Goodness" it was Orpheus' musical skill which moved Nature to praise, here it is clear that it is the power of a common indwelling spirit which both accounts for the skill and motivates Nature to respond:

For the story of Orpheus is of the truth.

For there was such a person a cunning player on the harp.

For he was a believer in the true God and assisted in the spirit.

For he played upon the harp in the spirit by breathing upon the strings.

For this will affect every thing that is sustained by the spirit, even every thing in nature. (C 52-56)

Smart's preoccupation with the ideal Christian hero has been much commented on. Although the comments are valid, they tend to obscure Smart's equal preoccupation with the Christian hero himself, Christ. This preoccupation (which permeates the Hymns while David is mentioned only once¹) ties together and renders more understandable the themes of praise and gratitude, and so is one of the unifying forces in the "Song." Also, as the "Word," and as an agent in the Creation, Christ is of especial interest to Smart.

Smart's references to Christ have been seen only as a device whereby continuity between the Old and New Testaments might be established. (He is both the "Christ"

¹In "Easter Day," II, 810.

of the New Testament and the "Lamb" of the Old.) In "On the Power of the Supreme Being," however, Smart saw Christ's function as being somewhat different, though no less orthodox. After a catalogue of Old Testament miracles, Smart states, "... 'tis man's redemption / That crowns thy glory, and thy pow'r confirms." (I, 239) So man's salvation, and the ministrations of the Shepherd, is one reason for man's praise of the Almighty. Nature, on the other hand, is exhorted to praise simply because God manifests himself in Nature: there is no hint whatsoever of its own salvation. Of course there could be no hint, as Smart had not yet imbued Nature with the life-giving spirit.

Although in Jubilate Agno Smart does restore Nature to a high level of spirituality, salvation is still generally reserved for mankind: "For I am ready to die for his sake--who lay down his life for all mankind." (B₁ 98) The one exception, not suprisingly, is Jeoffry: "For he knows that God is his Saviour." (B₂ 739) Jubilate Agno does record Smart's belief that he is one of the elect: "For I have adventured myself in the name of the Lord, and he hath mark'd me for his own." (B₁ 21)

These scattered references to Christ and salvation in Jubilate Agno set the stage for further developments, developments which take place in the Hymns and Spiritual Songs.

For all its illumination, Jubilate Agno is finally a frustrating work. For all its theory of unity and harmony it fails to achieve unity and harmony itself. But in its theory, and in the bits of that theory it manages to put into practice, it holds the key to understanding the satisfying harmony of the Hymns and the sweeter harmony of "A Song to David." In the development of his technique and in the understanding of his theme Smart is now at the point where "...the two lines may converge at a high peak, so that we get a masterpiece."¹

¹Eliot, in the Introduction to Pound, op. cit. p. 17.

CHAPTER FOUR

HARMONY: HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

In the Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England Smart for the first time in a religious work achieves harmony of style, theme, and structure. The harmony does not extend to every one of the hymns, as some of them are painfully broken-backed,¹ but it does extend to some of them, and certainly does to the work taken as a whole. It is achieved largely as a result of the successful application of Smart's theories about language and religion, as a result of "identity."

The Hymns were written as part of Smart's personal project to create a new liturgy for the Church of England. He thus obviously expected them to be used in public worship. It is not as hymns but as poems, however, that this chapter intends to discuss the work.

The outstanding characteristic of the poetry Smart creates in the Hymns is its simplicity. Although a few muddy passages, usually found in the less important

¹See "On the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," II, 846. The first five stanzas form one unit, and the last four another.

patriotic poems, have given rise to critical disagreement¹ over Smart's diction, the following is generally characteristic of all the poems:

Tansy, calaminth and daisies,
On the river's margin thrive;
And accompany the mazes
Of the stream that leaps alive. ("St. Philip
and St. James," II, 814)

'Tis He that puts all hearts in tune
With strings that never jar,
And they that rise to praise him soon
Shall win the MORNING STAR.

The morning star, and pearl of price,
And stone of lucid white,
Are all provocatives from vice,
To heav'n and true delight. ("Easter Day," II,
808)

I am tempted to quote endlessly and let the simple clarity of the lines speak for itself. What is obvious is that these lines are quite unlike anything in the Seatonian poems. Gone is the circumlocution, the semantic mis-fires, the tortuous images, and the blank verse. Here the tight stanzas and regular rhymes impose an order which bring out the best in Smart; concreteness, compression, and vivid immediacy. Much of this is due to the literalness with which Smart now sees things. Convoluted similes have been replaced with metaphors which absolutely identify subject and image, and thus produce concreteness, and compression. In the second stanza quoted above, for example, it is clear that Smart sees man's heart as a musical instrument which,

¹See Karina Williamson, "Christopher Smart's Hymns and Spiritual Songs," Philological Quarterly, XXXVIII, (1959), 413-424, and Spacks, The Poetry of Vision, pp. 156-157, 161.

when properly tuned, can be used to praise God. For the most part, however, all kinds of imagery are dropped in the Hymns in favour of simple description. It is as if the intense reality of things has so impressed itself on Smart that all he has to do is name them and enough has been said:

Tansy, calaminth and daisies
On the river's margin thrive;
And accompany the mazes
Of the stream that leaps alive. ("St. Philip and
St. James," II, 814)

The simple beauty of the stanza just quoted would be difficult to surpass. The last two lines are particularly striking. They state literally that the stream is alive and leaping, but the syntax is such that the image created is also one of a stream alive with leaping fish, and so both impressions fuse into a single memorable image. Smart is not, however, always successful with the literal image, as the following stanza reveals:

Peace be to the souls of those
Which for Jesus Christ have bled,
Or that triumph'd o'er their foes
With the coals upon their head. ("St. Simon and
St. Jude," II, 839)

The image of a line of saints walking along with coals on their heads is certainly a ludicrous one!¹ But the lofty image is handled more simply, and thus to better effect:

The fiend upon the land prevails,
And o'er the floods in triumph sails,
Do goodness all she can. ("The Crucifixion of
Our Blessed Lord," II, 804)

¹Smart also seems to have missed the point. See Romans 12:20.

The diction of the Hymns is generally far more simple than that of the Seatonian poems, but Smart's ear and mind are quite capable of inserting just the right latinate word, and he does it oftener and with even greater effect than in the secular poetry. Consider the use of the word "provocatives" in this stanza:

The morning star, and pearl of price,
And stone of lucid white,
Are all provocatives from vice,
To heav'n and true delight. ("Easter Day," II,
808)

The word provides a balance with the other one- and two-syllable words, is a strong enough and heavy enough word to carry the accumulated effect of "morning star," "pearl of price," and "stone of lucid white." And the meaning of the word is used just as well as its sound is: the beauty (goodness) of the three gems is attractive, exerting a force which, even as it pulls, indicates a turning away from, a temptation from, vice.

The few flashes of compression which shone in the Seatonian and the secular poetry here shine steadily and strongly, as in these lines from "Ash Wednesday, First Day of Lent":

And leave repentance to the gasp
Of hope-retarded death. (II, 799)

And in "The Crucifixion of Our Blessed Lord":

Behold the man! the tyrant said,
As in the robes of scoff array'd,
And crown'd with thorns he stood. (II, 804)

The use of "scoff" as a noun helps compress the lines, as use as a verb would require a subject. Further compression

results when the noun is used in a prepositional phrase modifying "robes." Thus the image of Christ robed in kingly attire as well as the picture of the mocking soldiers are evoked in one short line.

Poems constructed of regular stanzas can be unified far more easily than those written in blank verse. Stanza can be linked to stanza (as in "MORNING STAR" to "the morning star" on p. 51 above) to create unity within a poem. Or unity may be achieved by beginning successive stanzas with the same refrain, as in "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple," which repeats "Praise him..." throughout the last half of the poem. (II, 798-799) Another possibility is that successive stanzas are paralleled, as in "Circumcision," in which Smart first addresses swans, then lilies, and finally doves. (II, 791) Thus repetition and parallelism can be used to much better effect than when lost in the verbal morass of blank verse. It should be noted, however, that a single device is not enough to transform Smart's poetry. In "The King's Restoration" (II, 821) the repetition of first lines and the parallelism of successive stanzas does not make the poem a good one.

Stanzas can also be grouped together for various purposes. "Trinity Sunday," (II, 819) for example, is composed of three groups of three stanzas each, followed by a single concluding stanza which affirms, "...God is great and one." Each stanza contains different groups of

threes: "One Lord, one faith, one font," "Man, soul and angel," "Ye poets, seers and priests," etc. All of this makes for a satisfying harmony, albeit an intellectual one. Complete harmony is achieved when the theme fits smoothly and naturally into such a structure: it does so in "Trinity Sunday," but not on the scale of "A Song to David." It is in the "Song" that all these techniques for unifying and harmonizing a poem are used to the best advantage.

Although the style of these poems is certainly generally conducive to the creation of an over-all harmony, it is extremely uneven. It is in the unity of structure and theme that Smart begins to achieve a satisfying harmony. Even as the stanzas of individual hymns are linked together, so are the hymns linked together by means of a technique Moira Dearnley informs us is epanastrophe.¹ For example, the link between "Remember Peter's tears," the last line of Hymn VII, and "Hark! the cock proclaims the morning," the first line of Hymn VIII, is obvious. (II, 800) These links are not always thematic: sometimes simply the last word in a hymn is the same as the first in the next hymn, though they may refer to different ideas. Smart employs the device so completely that the last word in the whole series of hymns, "Word," is the same as the first word in the first hymn. This circular

¹Dearnley, op. cit., p. 248.

structure is reminiscent of the treatment of colours in

Jubilate Agno:

For WHITE is the first and the best.

.....
For RED is the next working round the Orange.

.....
For pale works about to White again. (B₂ 652, 658, 663)

Another aspect of the structural organization is that the thirty-five hymns are based, in chronological order, on the calendar of the Church, obviously to simplify their use with the Prayer Book. This adherence to the Church year brings to mind as an obvious possible corollary an adherence to the natural year, to the changes of the seasons. This possibility leads to a consideration of the thematic unity of the Hymns.

Dearnley points out that Smart does attempt to use the natural year as a backdrop to his more obvious reliance on the Church year.¹ Thus the spring and the summer give him the opportunity to indulge his fondness for Nature, a fondness which often produces his best poetry:

Couslips seize upon the fallow,
And the cardamine in white,
Where the corn-flowers join the mallow,
Joy and health, and thrift unite. ("St. Philip
and St. James," II, 819)

Lo the swelling fruits of summer,
With inviting colours dy'd,
Hang, for ev'ry casual comer,
O'er the fence projecting wide. ("The Nativity
of St. John the Baptist," II, 827)

Examples for autumn are difficult to find, however, (there is one in "St. Simon and St. Jude," II, 839) and there is

¹Ibid., p. 270.

no celebration of the natural winter. Dearnley sees this as a breakdown in organization, as yet another illustration of Smart's inability to carry anything through to its conclusion.¹ This is unfair, and another explanation will be given below.²

Of more significance thematically is the juxtaposition of a spiritual season with the natural one:

Browsing kids, and lambkins grazing,
Colts and younglings of the drive,
Come with all your modes of praising,
Bounding through the leafless grove.
("Epiphany," II, 793)

This stanza is meaningless in a purely natural context: why is Smart exhorting young animals to praise in January? Lambing, after all, takes place in April. Smart knows it is winter, viz. "the leafless grove," so the animals must have some sort of spiritual significance, something like: "The Advent of Christ brings a supernatural spring into the natural winter." The point is made more explicitly in "The Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," which comes in the following December. In it Christ's birth banishes winter in favour of an eternal spring:

Where the scenes are ever vernal,
And the loves be love indeed!
.....
Boreas now no longer winters
On the desolated coast;
Oaks no more are riv'n in splinters
By the whirlwind and his host. (II, 847)

¹Ibid., p. 281.

²See p. 64.

This spiritual season is again juxtaposed with the natural one in the following stanzas:

Study sits beneath her arbour,
By the bason's glossy side;
While the boat from out its harbour
Exercise and pleasure guide.

Pray'r and praise be mine employment,
Without grudging or regret,
Lasting life and long enjoyment,
Are not here, and are not yet.

Hark! aloud, the black-bird whistles,
With surrounding fragrance blest,
And the goldfinch in the thistles
Makes provision for her nest. ("St. Philip and
St. James," II, 814-815)

The sudden intrusion of spiritual winter into a joyous recitation of the delights of natural spring is curious indeed. Perhaps Smart is saying that, however enjoyable and praiseworthy natural spring is, it is the spiritual season one finds oneself in that is finally important.

This is virtually the extent of the somewhat cyclical thematic unity which parallels the decidedly cyclical structural unity of the work, at least as it appears to Moira Dearnley.¹ It is really, however, only the beginning. The juxtaposition of the two kinds of seasons, and the resulting balance between the spiritual and the natural leads to further related themes being linked together which Smart not only deals with, but emphasizes to the extent that the Hymns becomes a very satisfying aesthetic whole. (This is not to say that all the poems are of the highest order: "St. Simon and St. Jude" and "St.

¹Dearnley, op. cit., pp. 270-281.

Michael and All Angels" are simply not very good.)

The paradox of time and eternity¹ is the first note sounded in the supernatural/natural theme:

Ye that sally from the portal
Of yon everlasting bow'rs,
Sounding symphonies immortal,
Years, and months, and days, and hours.
("New Year," II, 789)

Here eternal angels, coming from "everlasting bow'rs," play music which is bound in time. This, coming as it does in the first hymn, prepares the way for a general and recurring emphasis on other-worldly things and values, usually in opposition to worldly things and values. In "St. Matthias" Smart requests,

Lord our spirits disencumber,
From the world our hearts dismiss. (II, 801)

The most extended treatment of this theme occurs, not unexpectedly, in "The Crucifixion of Our Blessed Lord," a good opportunity for highlighting the essential differences between the values and priorities of Christians and non-Christians:

Ah, still desirous of a king,
To give voluptuous vice its swing
With passions like a brute;
By Jesus Christ came truth and grace,
But none indulgence, pension, place,
The slaves of SELF to suit. (II, 806)

In at least one place in this hymn the supernatural is fused with the natural:

And was it He,...

.....

¹Dearnley does point out this paradox, ibid., p. 274.

Which fed in Galilea's groves
 The fainting thousands with the loaves
 And fishes of his word! (II, 805)

The deliberate "spiritualization" of the loaves and fishes is startling and very effective.

Smart repeatedly emphasizes the three highest Christian virtues--faith, hope, and charity--which several times appear together, but oftener are dealt with separately. He also, of course, sounds his old refrain--the necessity for praise and prayer. A refrain not sounded in the Seatonian poems, but which Smart repeats over and over in the Hymns is the physical poverty of the Christian saint:

Heroes of the Christian cause,
 Candidates for God's applause,
 --Leaving all for Christ his sake;
 Scorning temporal reward,
 Ready to confess the Lord
 At the cross or stake. ("St. Barnabas," II, 826)

Greatness here severely shunn'd,
 Falls in heav'n to virtue's share,
 And the poor man finds a fund
 Of eternal treasures there. ("St. Peter," II, 829)

In Jubilate Agno Smart had written: "For I lent my flocks and my herds and my lands at once unto the Lord." (B₁ 52) The person who holds on to the things of this world, he concludes in "St. Barnabas," is damned: "Misers have no hope."

Even worse than the miser, however, is the hypocrite, the one who shows, but does not feel, gratitude:

Ev'n exactors of the toll,
 And the harlot of the stew,
 Sooner give the Lord his due
 Than men disguis'd of soul. ("St. Matthew," II, 833)

In Jubilate Agno Smart had indicated the importance of sincerity: "For sincerity is a jewel which is pure & transparent, eternal & inestimable." (B₁ 40)

Thus, although the contrast between earthly and heavenly values is perhaps an obvious theme for a series of hymns, Smart's repeated emphasis along the lines enumerated helps hold the Hymns together as a single work.

This theme has a further ramification which, for Smart certainly, is the most important. It is salvation, which is the informing, harmonizing theme of the work. The seasonal cycle, the emphasis on praise and prayer, faith, hope, and charity, the condemnation of misers and hypocrites are all explained and rendered finally intelligible by reference to Smart's concern for salvation--his own, that of everyone who ever lived, and that of Nature.

Christ figures prominently in the Hymns as the Saviour, the Lamb sacrificed for the World. He is introduced in the first stanza of the first hymn, and "the Lamb" is brought in later on in the same hymn. And here is the final stanza of the entire hymn cycle:

Though the heav'n and earth shall fail,
Yet his spirit shall prevail,
Till all nations have concurr'd
In the worship of the WORD. ("The Holy Innocents,"
II, 851)

Thus the most important thematic cycle begins with Smart himself asking for the blessing of the Lamb, and ends with the hope that all the earth will worship Christ,

which in turn links back with the first hymn, through repetition of "Word," and the wheel has come full circle. Theme and structure have been united in a satisfying harmony.

Of his own salvation Smart has no doubts. He has been chosen:

My lot in holy ground was cast,
And for the prize I threw;
And in the path by thousands past
The Lord shall make me new. ("Easter Day," II,
807)

This salvation is the reason for his concern to pray and praise:

O let the people, with the priest,
Adorn themselves to pray,
And with their faces to the east
Their adoration pay. ("Easter Day," II, 807-
808)

This sheds another light on Smart's emphasis of heavenly values. The man of faith who worships God in Christ exhibits faith, hope, charity, is honest, true, and lays up his treasure in heaven where moths and rust do not corrupt. Smart makes the connection explicit in "Ash Wednesday, First Day of Lent":

Alas! the more of us defraud
The Lord of his most righteous due,
And live by guiding truth unaw'd,
And vanities pursue.

The harlot vice with joy we clasp,
Nor shun to meet her tainted breath;
And leave repentance to the gasp
Of hope-retarded death. (II, 799)

Smart is also concerned with the salvation of all mankind, past and present. The hymn "Conversion of St.

Paul" (II, 794) recounts the life-saving acts of Christ in the past, and "Easter Day" makes it plain that the Resurrection provided a means of salvation for those dead before Christ's day:

The souls that perish'd in the flood
He bid again to bliss;
And caused his rod with hope to bud
From out the dread abyss. (II, 809)

It should be noted that Smart is not an incipient universalist, as in "St. Matthias" he exhorts,

Let the few of Christ be hearty
In the cause they bleed to win. (II, 802)

Christ died to save the world, but none is saved unless he recognizes and accepts Christ's work. Praise rises spontaneously after this recognition.¹

Hymns on saints who were missionaries move Smart to long,

O that all the human race
In what region, clime, or zone,
Would the genuine faith embrace,
As in these thy kingdom's known;
Prosper thou the pilgrims sent
To prepare the great event. ("St. James," II, 832)

And later he declares optimistically,

Yea Edom one and all
Shall choose the Lord their chief;
And he shall finally recall
The sons of unbelief. ("St. Andrew," II, 845)

To the objection that the presence of these ideas is due

¹"Conversion" in the evangelical sense seems too strong a word to use in Smart's theology--he certainly never uses it. Unlike Cowper or Newton, Smart does not speak of the "saving blood of Christ," and his hymns give no indication of an evangelical interest in the Atonement. His spiritualization of Nature also moves him out of their orbit.

simply to the choice of missionary saints, it can be replied that Smart was free to choose other saints, and that the emphasis is too marked to be coincidental.

Nature plays an important role in the Hymns, as it does in most of Smart's best poetry. It, too, is very definitely restored to full life as a result of Christ's redeeming work, and joins man in praising his Lord. In this case, of course, there is no question of some recognizing and accepting and some not. As Nature fell en bloc, so is it restored:

They knew him well, and could not err,
To him they all appeal'd;
The beast of sleek or shaggy fur,
And found their natures to recur
To what they were in Eden's field. ("The Ascension
of Our Lord Jesus Christ," II, 817)

This hymn, coming as it does in the spring and after the two hymns which praise the natural spring, links spiritual rebirth with the natural rebirth. And thus it should now be quite clear why there is no celebration of the natural winter, and why the lack of such a celebration is not due to a breakdown in organization, as Dearnley suggests.¹ The earlier examples of the juxtaposition of a spiritual season with a natural one illustrate that Smart is using the natural year to highlight the importance of one's spiritual condition. The preceeding discussion demonstrates that Smart's abiding concern is with salvation (rebirth) and the godly life. To celebrate winter in this context

¹See below pp. 57-58.

would shatter the whole pattern.

This rebirth is not confined to the animals, but extends also to the mineral and vegetable worlds:

For all that dwell in depth or wave,
 And ocean--every drop--
 Confess'd his mighty pow'r to save... .

 'Twas his the pow'rs of hell to curb,
 And men possess'd to free;
 And all the blasting fiends disturb
 From seed of bread, from flow'r and herb,
 From fragrant shrub and stately tree.
 ("The Ascension," II, 817-818)

Smart's vision of Nature has certainly come a long way from the barrenness of the Seatonian poems. Each object, spirit-filled, is of vital importance, and reverts to a state of innocence in Christ's presence. J. Middleton Murry remarks that this perception, this mode of understanding is "...the true, the strange Christian naivete." It is the "...sense of communion in life between all living creatures,"¹ a sense which is not found in many poets, ancient or modern.

Two general points remain to be made. It is obvious that Smart does not deal with his theme within a logical progression beginning with his own salvation, moving to mankind's and finishing with Nature's. He does begin with his own situation, move to that of the Old Testament saints, then to the rebirth of Nature, and finally ends with a general missionary hope. Admittedly this is done very generally, but there is no need for a

¹J. Middleton Murry, Discoveries (London: W. Collins & Sons & Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 185.

strictly logical progression or cycle. Salvation and the values it demands are treated against the backdrop of the changing seasons, and this inter-play between the natural and the supernatural unifies the work most satisfyingly, especially within its circular structure.

The emphasis on the actual redeeming work of Christ, on the Atonement itself, is not so pronounced as it might be to uphold the thesis. Anytime Christ appears, as in "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple," (II, 796) seems to be excuse enough to acclaim him for his matchless deed. The answer to this is that, since Smart is following the Church, Easter would be the only chance to introduce this his most important theme, and he wants to raise it at every opportunity. Thus the objection becomes further evidence in support of the general thesis. It should be kept in mind that these poems are intended to be hymns, and not a theological treatise.

Thus salvation seems to be the crucial, binding theme of the Hymns and Spiritual Songs as, with the minor exception of the patriotic hymns (only four in number) it dominates and controls the hymns. This would not be true were it not for the new vision of Nature Smart has acquired. Sophia Blaydes maintains that the Hymns is "...perhaps the most comprehensive statement of Smart's religious convictions."¹ If this is so, then the role and

¹Blaydes, op. cit., p. 92.

importance of Christ's redeeming work for Smart's later poetry is greater than has been thought. The figure of Christ, at least, is an important unifying factor in "A Song to David."

In any case, it is obvious that theme and structure in the Hymns work together to produce a harmony far more subtle and satisfying than anything produced by the simple order of the Seatonian poems. And the style, although it has its failings, abets rather than hinders the creation of the harmony. But Smart has not finished. The lines of technique and experience are to meet at a yet higher point, and so create a yet sweeter, stronger harmony.

CHAPTER FIVE

HARMONY: "A SONG TO DAVID"

In the penultimate stanza of "A Song to David," as he thunders to his conclusion, Smart affirms triumphantly, "Glorious the song, when God's the theme." He is far from being right generally, as some of his earlier poetry unfortunately reveals, but he could not have been more correct about this particular poem. It is the purpose of this chapter to show both how and why this poem is "glorious" when much of Smart's work is far from being so, and to show that he finally perfected the techniques and ideas on which he had worked for years. The resulting harmony is due in large part to Smart's theory of "identity" and its application to style, theme, and even structure. It is also due to the experimentation with the theory in Jubilate Agno and in Hymns and Spiritual Songs.

The "Song" repeats the stylistic improvements of the Hymns over the Seatonian poems in kind, but also improves on the Hymns in degree. Thus the lines of this poem are invariably compressed, where those of the Hymns occasionally lapse into volubility, and are extremely evocative, where those are sometimes flat. Both compression and

the plenty of the autumn season are illustrated in this stanza:

For ADORATION rip'ning canes,
And cocoa's purest milk detains
The western pilgrim's staff;
Where rain in clasping boughs inclos'd,
And vines with oranges dispos'd,
Embow'r the social laugh. (I, LVIII)

The "rip'ning canes" and the "cocoa's purest milk" help produce the impression of fullness which the stanza creates without unnecessary verbiage. And a whole garden party, complete with its characteristic atmosphere, is evoked in the last two lines.

These next lines are compressed by virtue of unusual syntax. The verb "imbibes" takes for its subject all three lines, and thus the lines turn in on themselves, tightening the stanza and reflecting the tightness of the structure of the entire poem:

The nectarine his strong tint imbibes,
And apples of ten thousand tribes,
And quick peculiar quince. (I, LIX)

This ability to compress is often best demonstrated when Smart rewords biblical lines. "And render as you reap" (I, XLVI) is simply an extraordinary reworking of "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."¹ "Where ask is have, where seek is find, / Where knock is open wide" (I, LXXVII) is almost as impressive. That a good deal of Smart's translation of the Psalms is pure circumlocution is difficult to understand.

¹Luke 6:31.

At least once in the poem Smart takes a biblical line and enriches its meaning by applying his literal vision:

More precious that diviner part
Of David, even the Lord's own heart,
Great, beautiful, and new. (I, LXXXIII)

Here Smart takes the biblical statement that David is a man after the Lord's own heart, and rewords it to say that David's heart is the Lord's heart. The result is to emphasize more strongly the biblical statement..

Besides these biblical echoes Smart also uses some of the stock poetic diction of the eighteenth century, ("spotted ounce," "chear the winter") as well as the odd Miltonic left-over ("Satan, and all his powers that lie / In sempiternal night." I, XIII). It is not these, however, that engage the attention in the "Song," but rather the continual use of unconventional and startling diction and syntax. Much of the effect is due to Smart's vision of things as inter-related, as having the same function. Thus is found "Gem yielding blossom, yielding fruit," (I, XXII) and "From rocks pure honey gusing out, / For ADORATION springs." (I, LIV)

The technique of yoking together words and ideas not normally found together informs the reader even as it startles him: "The Lord is great and glad." (I, L) A second-rate poet might have used "good" or "mighty" instead of "glad," which nevertheless is a very appropriate word in a hymn of joy, and brings to mind a seldom

remembered characteristic of God. The same technique is used in these lines: "His pomp, his piety, was glad; / Majestic was his joy." (I, XV) Glad piety and majestic joy: the adjectives add new qualities to nouns in danger of losing their meanings in cliché. This sort of creative originality holds the reader's attention, and removes the poem far from the sleepy predictability of the Seatonian poems.

The literal quality of Smart's poetry, which first surfaced in the Hymns, is in great evidence in this poem. Some of this is obviously the direct result of the "spiritualization" of Nature: "The shoals upon the surface leap, / And love the glancing sun." (I, XXIV) Most of it is simply the result of completely identifying metaphor with subject, as in these lovely lines:

Sweet the musician's ardour beats,
While his vague mind's in quest of sweets,
The choicest flow'rs to hive. (I, LXXIII)

The identification of the musician with the bee is so complete and literal that the metaphor becomes less an image than a simple statement of fact. The second half of stanza LIV does much the same thing:

All scenes of painting croud the map
Of nature; to the mermaid's lap
The scaled infant clings.

Smart looks at Nature as if it were a large map, perhaps an older type of map with its many painted scenes and figures. But he literally identifies Nature with the map,

as he takes a mermaid (which often appears in the corners of old maps) and places her in time and space. She thus exists, literally, both on the map and in Nature. (In this stanza honey gushes from rocks, so perhaps Smart is also saying that fanciful things are as real as "real" things.)

As is the case in the Hymns, unadorned description of creatures and their activities, sometimes the mere naming of names, is found throughout the poem. Smart so vividly sees the reality of all objects that images are not always necessary. The stanzas on the subjects of David's poetry as well as the Adoration stanzas clearly illustrate this vision.¹

Smart chooses the lyric form for the "Song," and once again it proves to be a fortunate choice. The poem does conform to the two Aristotelian requirements for a lyric, being short and capable of immediate comprehension. The "Song," although eighty-six stanzas long, is quickly read, and is very clear in its main points. (There are some obscurities which no amount of scholarship is likely to clear up; the stanzas on "the pillars of the Lord," I, XXX-XXXVIII.) Of more note, however, is Smart's use of a regular stanzaic form with a regular rhyme scheme. The Hymns revealed how much better Smart uses regular stanzas than blank verse, and he has had a good deal of practice

¹See below pp. 89-90.

with this particular stanzaic form, as he uses it frequently in his translation of the Psalms. Thus the techniques of catalogue, parallelism, and repetition, which were used to good advantage in the Hymns, here are used superbly well.

Catalogue is the single most important stylistic device used in the "Song." Indeed, from the description of David's character to the final list of things glorious, the poem is virtually a series of catalogues. The device is thus forced to become a vehicle for the elucidation of the themes of the poem. (There would be no harmony in the poem if it were not.) One of Smart's themes is the variety and plenitude of God's Creation, a theme he highlights through the use of catalogue and the comparison and contrast catalogue makes possible. Thus in stanza LXI, while listing the various plants and flowers of winter, he also contrasts their reactions to the cold:

The laurels with the winter strive;
The crocus burnishes alive
Upon the snow-clad earth:
For ADORATION myrtles stay
To keep the garden from dismay,
And bless the sight from dearth.

In the profusion of these Adoration stanzas things which seem to have no relationship other than their common adoration are joyfully catalogued together:

The spotted ounce, and playsome cubs
Run rustling 'mongst the flow'ring shrubs,
And lizards feed the moss;
For ADORATION beasts embark,
While waves upholding halcyon's ark
No longer roar and toss. (I, LV)

The apparent lack of order in this profusion harmonizes with a major thematic point: all Nature has equal spiritual importance and praises God through its existence, so any combination of objects which comes to Smart's mind is valid, and any relationship or link he sees or thinks he sees between things is real. It is the poetic application of his theory of "identity."

Equally important for the harmony of the poem is the technique of stretching a catalogue over a series of stanzas, one item per stanza. Smart first used this homiletic device in the Hymns and here its most obvious uses are in the stanzas on David's attributes and his themes, and on the "pillars of the Lord." As is quite obvious, it is a simple, yet effective, way to unify a section within a poem, and thus contributes to the unity of the whole poem.

Parallelism, involving both comparison and contrast, is used repeatedly. Often the last half of a stanza contrasts with as well as balances the first half:

Beauteous the fleet before the gale;
 Beauteous the multitudes in mail,
 Ranked arms and crested heads:
 Beauteous the garden's umbrage mild,
 Walk, water, meditated wild,
 And all the bloomy beds. (I, LXXVIII)

Here the expansive pictures of majestic galleons running with the wind, and the endless rows of armoured men, contrast with the picture of a garden with its shaded walk, quiet water, and beds of flowers. Or the contrast may be

one between the abstract and the concrete:

Precious the bounteous widow's mite;
And precious, for extream delight,
The largess from the churl:
Precious the ruby's blushing blaze,
And alba's blest imperial rays,
And pure cerulean pearl. (I, LXXXI)

The first half of the stanza presents a spiritual example of preciousness, and the second half a physical example.

Sometimes the contrasts are played out through every line of the stanza:

Of fowls--e'en ev'ry beak and wing
Which chear the winter, hail the spring,
That live in peace or prey;
They that make music, or that mock,
The quail, the brave domestic cock,
The raven, swan, and jay. (I, XXIII)

Birds of the winter and of the spring (note the neat parallel between "chear" and "hail" and the contrast of winter with spring), peaceful birds and warlike birds, ones that can sing and ones that only screech, the wild quail and the domestic cock; everyone is different, yet everyone is equal. Thus once again a stylistic characteristic carries important thematic strains. Although Smart sees all things as equal, he also sees their differences. The world holds meaning for Smart, not only in its spirituality, but also in the variety and beauty of its differences. One of the beauties of the "Song" is that he communicates and also harmonizes these two viewpoints, sometimes even within two lines: "Of beasts--the beaver plods his task; / While the sleek tigers roll and bask." (I, XXV)

The repetition of a single word at the beginning of successive lines is called anaphora. Smart uses anaphora in the last fifteen stanzas of the poem to help produce the ecstatic conclusion of the "Song." Stanza LXXXIV illustrates the use of the device:

Glorious the sun in mid career;
Glorious th'assembled fires appear;
Glorious the comet's train:
Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
Glorious the almighty stretched-out arm;
Glorious th'enraptur'd main.

The effect of this simple repetition when applied to the condensed imagery (no verbs are used, a device known as ecphonesis) is powerful to say the least. Simple statement produces an exalted conclusion where the ornate images of the Seatonian poems failed.

All of the stylistic features of the poem discussed above contribute to the harmony of the "Song," either by relating to the theme or to the structure or to both. It now remains to be seen how theme and structure harmonize with each other and again with the style.

Smart revealed his intense interest in numbers and their power in Jubilate Agno:

For there is a mystery in numbers.
For One is perfect and good being at unity in himself.
For Two is the most imperfect of all numbers.
For every thing infinitely perfect is Three.
.....
For Six is very good consisting of twice three.
For Seven is very good consisting of two complete numbers.
(C 19-22, 30-31)

This belief that some numbers are "good" and others are

"imperfect" explains why the "Song" is structured on groups of stanzas; groups of one, three, seven, or the multiples of three and seven. Raymond Havens first illuminated the organization of the poem, and his interpretation has stood the test of time.¹ It will be used as a background against which to discuss both the themes of the poem, and the harmony Smart creates in it.

The Invocation, stanzas I to III, invokes David to "hail and hear," and "From topmost eminence appear / To this the wreath I weave." More importantly, it says some significant things about David himself, sets the tone and atmosphere of the poem, and introduces the basic themes. David is immediately almost deified: "O THOU, that sit'st upon a throne, / With harp of high majestic tone." (I, I) As the poem progresses David is more and more closely identified with Christ, until the final stanza completes the comparison.

Smart thus begins on a high note, and the tone he sets, with the exalted address ("O Servant of God's holiest charge") and with references to the "King of kings," is a grand one. The astonishing thing is that he moves steadily upward from this level to the climax of the poem. There is no pause, no decrease in intensity. It is without doubt an impressive performance.

¹Raymond Havens, "The Structure of Smart's Song to David," Review of English Studies, XIV, (1938), 178-182.

The basic themes of the poem are also introduced in these three stanzas: the unique function of David the musician and music in general, and the praise and gratitude of Nature. These themes and their corollaries are played out in the poem subtly and precisely. The wreath Smart weaves is a tightly woven one.

The initial direct address, "O THOU," soon changes in stanza four to the third person. Throughout the poem Smart switches back and forth from directly addressing David to referring to him in the third person, and finally ends the poem, as he began it, with direct address: "By meekness, called thy Son." (I, LXXXVI) At times both Christ (stanza XLI) and the reader (the exercise on the decalogue) are addressed directly. All of this accomplishes several things. It reduces the monotony of continuously addressing David, it makes for a structural unity, as Smart begins and ends with addressing David, and it provides thematic unity by applying what is said to David, Christ, and the reader--for all three the roles of spectator and participant are being continually reversed.

First of all David's worthiness as "the minister of praise at large" must be demonstrated, and so Smart catalogues his virtues in the next fourteen stanzas. Stanza IV catalogues twelve virtues, somewhat monotonously it must be admitted, and then a homiletic device is used to discuss each virtue--one virtue to each stanza. Smart is genuinely interested in the character and nature of great

men, but this section may also owe its inclusion to the contemporary battle being waged over David's character. Briefly, the controversy began in 1740 when Patrick Delany published An Historical Account of the Life and Reign of David, a work which took issue with Pierre Boyle's An Historical and Critical Dictionary, which had declared that David's record was not an unsullied one.¹ There was, for instance, the matter of Uriah's murder, and the adultery with Bathsheba. In 1760 Samuel Chandler supported Delany with a sermon which detailed the similarities between King David and King George III. When the anonymous, irreverent History of the Man after God's own Heart appeared the following year, ridiculing both Delany and Chandler, a full-scale pamphlet war erupted. Although Smart was familiar with Delany's work and was also influenced by it,² the "Song" is still more correctly described as a religious lyric than as a propaganda piece.

This section, however, accomplishes more thematically than mere justification of David's place and function. In these stanzas is continued the near-divinization of David, as, Christ-like, he pities, forgives, and saves, and even defies Satan and all his powers. Smart obviously

¹This outline of the controversy is taken from Dearnley, op. cit., pp. 169-176.

²See Robert Brittain, "Christopher Smart and Dr. Delany," Times Literary Supplement, 7 March 1936, 204.

sees David as a type of Christ, and this idea runs throughout the poem as one of its unifying elements.

Patricia Spacks, who has written some of the best criticism of Smart's poetry, points out the thematic significance of the following lines:¹

Clean in his gestures, hands, and feet,
To smite the lyre, the dance compleat,
To play the sword and spear. (I, IX)

Comparison and contrast are used throughout the poem, but they are not used merely for stylistic effect, and here the final purpose of the unusual verbal use, "smite the lyre," "play the sword," is not merely to startle the reader into alertness, though it will do that. As he has revealed in Jubilate Agno, Smart sees all phenomena as interrelated--things simply are not bound by specific or stereotyped functions--each can and does perform another's function. Thus all activity is unified and, in sense, identical. In this context, to "smite the lyre" and to "play the sword" is perfectly reasonable. Beginning with this illustration from the life of a man who best exemplifies this unity (he is "man, soul, and angel, without peer, / Priest, champion, sage and boy." I, XV) Smart goes on, particularly in the Adoration stanzas, to illustrate from all of Creation. Thus style and theme unite to create harmony within the poem.

¹Spacks, The Poetry of Vision, pp. 130-131.

The seventeenth stanza, which should belong to this section in order to give it fourteen stanzas, is more closely allied with the next section, which is on the subjects of David's psalms. "Such slight irregularities are, like imperfect rimes and distorted accents, very common in poetry."¹ However, as the stanza is different in form from both preceding and following stanzas, its function may be to provide a break from the monotony of the homiletic technique.

Nine stanzas comprise the section on the subjects of David's songs, one stanza for each subject. A section logically required by the Invocation, it also continues and elaborates some of the thematic hints of the previous section, and is thus an integral part of the poem. The most important continuation is the theme of unity:

Of beasts--the beaver plods his task;
While yet the sleek tigers roll and bask,
Nor yet the shades arouse;
Her cave the mining coney scoops;
Where o'er the mead the mountain stoops,
The kids exult and brouse. (I, XXV)

The work of the beaver is on a par with the play of the tiger, as is the worried busyness of the coney with the carefree air of the kid. Here Smart shows his interest in the individual, an interest free from all ulterior motives such as the desire to demonstrate God's presence in Nature, as was the case in "On the Immensity of the Supreme Being." Because David sang of them and because of

¹Havens, op. cit., p. 179.

their individual spiritual importance Smart exults in his catalogue. This section is a step towards the Adoration stanzas, in which Smart also exults in individuality, but also shows that individual activity in itself praises the Almighty.

The profusion of individual objects in this section is thus logical and necessary, both for the style and for the theme, and so once again the two merge into one expression. The catalogue and repeated comparison emphasize a major theme, and the catalogue and homiletic technique also emphasize the stylistic and structural unity and continuity of the poem.

This section is followed by "...three stanzas of no apparent pattern devoted to the results of his singing."¹ The stanzas do, however, demonstrate that David's music is divine ("He sent the godly sounds aloft"), and its results have divine power ("...satan with his hand he quell'd"). The heavenly direction of David's thoughts (stanza XXIX) is the only link with the next section on the "pillars of the Lord," and so this section does begin somewhat abruptly.

These nine stanzas on the "pillars" are the most obscure in the poem, and have provoked a variety of simple and complex exegeses. What is obvious is that there is an introductory stanza followed by seven stanzas, each one

¹Ibid.

apparently devoted to elucidating the peculiar character of a letter of the Greek alphabet as it relates to a day in the week of Creation. All this is followed by a single concluding stanza.

One interpretation of the stanzas, by Katherine Rogers, suggests that Smart "...coupled each phase of the Creation with a mystical name for the God Who brought it about, Whose very name, in Cabalistic belief, had creative power."¹ This thesis depends on Smart's knowledge of magic and the occult, cabalistic lore and Masonic symbolism, as well as of Egyptian, Hebrew, and Greek characters. Although Smart was a learned man, it is somewhat difficult to credit him with such a range of knowledge. Jubilate Agno does reveal Smart's interest and even belief in the mystical powers of words, so the thesis may have some validity.

Christopher Devlin has posited a more orthodox, Christian explanation, but it is also weak in places. "The seven stanzas," he claims, "describe seven aspects or appearances of Christ, the Word made Flesh."² Gamma, representing the number three, thus denotes spiritual perfection and Christ as the apex of Creation.³ But it could

¹Katherine Rogers, "The Pillars of the Lord: Some Sources of 'A Song to David,'" Philological Quarterly, XL, (1961), p. 531.

²Christopher Devlin, Poor Kit Smart (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), p. 141.

³Ibid., p. 144.

be objected that the third person of the Trinity is the Holy Ghost, not Christ.

The Monthly Review in 1763 suggested the simplest and perhaps the most correct explanation:

Few Readers probably will see into the Author's reason for distinguishing his seven pillars or monuments of the six days of creation, by the seven Greek letters he hath selected. These, we conjecture, are made choice of, as consecrated for the following reasons. Alpha and Omega, from a well-known text in the Revelation. Iota, Eta, and Sigma, because they are used to signify our Saviour, on altars and pulpits. Theta, as being the initials of Θεός, God; and Gamma as denoting the number three, held sacred by some Christians.¹

Whatever the correct explanation, as each letter undoubtedly somehow represents God, the whole exercise becomes a demonstration of God's identification with all things as all things emanate from him. As such, it becomes a thematic link between the earlier simple catalogue of creatures and the later Adoration stanzas and their catalogue of adoring Nature. One of the reasons for adoration is given in this section:

Iota's tuned to choral hymns
Of those that fly, while he that swims
In thankful safety lurks;
And foot, and chapitre, and niche,
The various histories enrich
Of God's recorded works. (I, XXXV)

God is the Creator, Saviour, and Sustainer of the universe, and in gratitude for this Nature praises him in one vast chorus. As is becoming steadily clearer, this poem is not

¹As quoted in Dearnley, op. cit., p. 181.

devoted exclusively to praising David: the figure of Christ, Nature, admonitions to the reader all play important parts. Thus a description of the Creation is not out of place in a hymn of this kind and of this length. Indeed, to have omitted explicit mention of God's dominating role would have weakened the poem and rendered a good deal of it meaningless, particularly the Adoration stanzas.

Another thematic link is forged when Smart hints that Christ had a hand in Creation: "His WORD accomplished the design." (I, XXX) It is a tenet of orthodox Christian belief that Christ (the "Word") was the agent through which Creation was effected.¹ Thus in the continuing comparison of David with Christ, Christ's role in Creation is mentioned as David slips momentarily from the stage. His concomitant function is described in the Adoration stanzas, where his music has creative power even as Christ has:

For ADORATION, David's Psalms
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
And he, who kneels and chants,
Prevails his passions to controul,
Finds meat and med'cine to the soul,
Which for translation pants. (I, LXIV)

Although these stanzas do present certain problems in understanding, it is clear that they are an integral part of the pattern of the poem.

Maira Dearnley maintains that "...there is a sudden shift of meaning" between the last stanza of the Creation

¹Col. 1:16.

section, stanza XXXVIII, and the next one, and again between it and the nine stanzas on the decalogue.¹ The logical link, however, seems obvious. Christ is brought into the description of Creation, and so there is really no break when stanza XXXIX begins:

There is but One who ne'er rebell'd,
But One by passion unimpell'd.

The suddenness of it is merely Smart's habit of repeatedly startling the reader into alertness; thematically it is all of a piece. And the reason for the lines,

He from himself his semblance sent,
Grand object of his own content,
And saw the God in CHRIST, (I, XXXIX)

is obvious. Smart means to make of the following exercise on the decalogue an amalgam of Old and New Testament commandments, and Christ again is the link, prefigured in the Old, present in the New.

After the first "Tell them, I am, JEHOVA said," (I, XL) the stanzas only very roughly follow the mosaic law, relying more on paraphrases of Christ's admonitions:

Distribute: pay the Lord his tithe,
And make the widow's heart-strings blithe;
Resort with those that weep;
As you from all and each expect,
For all and each thy love direct,
And render as you reap. (I, XLVI)

The Old Testament tithe is juxtaposed with the New Testament commandment to love one another. Nature has formed part of the pattern of each previous section, and this

¹Dearnley, op. cit., p. 187.

one is no exception:

Be good to him that pulls thy plough;
Due food and care, due rest, allow
For her that yields thee milk. (I, XLII)

Dearnley states, again somewhat bafflingly, that "Smart's exercise on the decalogue could almost be placed in parentheses, but in stanza XLIX, he returns to his central theme."¹ Stanza XLIX is the concluding one in this section, and states explicitly why the section is not "placed in parentheses": "O DAVID, highest in the list / Of worthies.... ." As I pointed out earlier, David is a type of Christ, an Old Testament prefigurement, and, as such, he not only kept the mosaic law but also kept the law of Christ, even though it had yet to be written down. Smart's concern to demonstrate this is obvious, is one of the major themes of the "Song," and reveals why the exercise on the decalogue takes the form it does. Of course the dominant theme of the poem is praise--David's, Nature's, and Smart's--but it is ridiculous to suppose that "praise" and "adoration" could be repeated endlessly for eighty-six stanzas to any worthwhile effect. Thus Smart introduces these other themes, all of them closely related to the dominant one, and weaves them together to form a varied yet harmonious wreath.

It is interesting to note the inclusion of the exercise in view of the fact that the characteristics of

¹Ibid.

the godly life were explored in the Hymns. The underlying idea in both cases is the same. While Nature adores spontaneously, effortlessly, man must be induced to praise his Creator. It follows that if a man lives a godly life, he will adore his Maker. Thus David, who best keeps God's laws ("highest in the list / Of worthies"), is the one who best sings God's praises (he is the "minister of praise at large").

David's primary role is to insist on God's ways and to repeat the "genuine word." (I, XLIX) The "genuine word" in this case is praise. And so stanza I introduces the well-known Adoration stanzas, twenty-one stanzas in which the phrase "For ADORATION" appears. The first fourteen of these deal with the seasons, with one introductory stanza, four groups of three stanzas each, and a concluding stanza. In these groups "For ADORATION" appears once in each stanza. It appears in the first line of stanza LII, in the second line of stanza LIII, in the third line of stanza LIV, and so on, for two full cycles. The phrase appears in the first line of the introductory and concluding stanzas, as well as in the first line of each of each of the final seven stanzas, a group devoted to an exercise on the senses.

As the most obvious aspect of the rigid organization of the poem, the technique has received some criticism.¹

¹Smart himself said that the "chief fault" of the poem was "...the exact REGULARITY and METHOD with which it is conducted." Quoted in Sherbo, op. cit., p. 175.

A case can be made, however, to support the contention that great art (and the "Song" is surely great art) requires a rigid structure which acts as a form to mold the artist's theme. The strict sonnet form has been the vehicle for some of the world's best poems--and probably for some of its worst. For if the structure obtrudes the artist has failed, but if structure and theme so fuse that what emerges is a single whole, as they do in the "Song," then the artist has succeeded. In these stanzas, as in all the poem, the structure provides for the flow of the theme. Laurence Binyon put the point succinctly when he said, "we seem worlds away from exercises on the Decalogue, exercises on the seasons, and on the senses."¹ That is what Eliot meant when he spoke of the meeting of the "lines" of technique and experience.

The importance of these stanzas to the harmony of the "Song" has been mentioned several times in this chapter. Thematically the concept of Nature existing "For ADORATION" is a logical progression from the previous sections:

Rich almonds colour to the prime
For ADORATION; tendrils climb,
And fruit-trees pledge their gems. (I, LIII)

The basic idea behind these stanzas is that meaning and beauty are one. Nature adores as it exists, and it is beautiful as it adores. The result is that the simple

¹Laurence Binyon, "The Case of Christopher Smart," English Association Pamphlet, XC, (1934), p. 6.

description of the activities of Nature is itself sufficient statement of the theme, and requires no elaboration.

This adoration of all Nature in every season is described by means of the familiar methods of contrast, comparison, and compression. For instance, the comparison of wild and cultivated is often used to impress again the participation of all things in the hymn of praise:

The wealthy crops of whit'ning rice,
'Mongst thiyne woods and groves of spice,
For ADORATION grow;
And, marshall'd in the fenced land,
The peaches and pomegranates stand,
Where wild carnations blow. (I, LX)

In spite of the simple, direct description, the variety of the catalogue creates the impression of luxuriance, of the incredible richness of God's Creation.

This section also continues the attempted fusion of Old and New Testament ideas and figures:

For ADORATION beasts embark,
While waves upholding halcyon's ark
No longer roar and toss. (I, LV)

The first line obviously refers to Noah's ark, while "ark" in the second line can be both Noah's ark and the boat Christ and his disciples were in when he stilled the wind and the waves.

The five stanzas devoted to illustrating the correct use of the five senses are particularly fine ones. Nature continues to play her important role, as everything from the bulfinch to cataracts and pineapples are vividly

evoked, but it becomes increasingly clear that Smart is advocating not only discretion in the sensual enjoyment of Nature, but also sensual subordination to spiritual things. Stanza LXV states that the sight of the worm can be as edifying as that of the constellations, stanza LXVIII compares sweet smelling incense with the sweeter breath of the man of prayer, and stanza LXIX maintains that God sends pineapples to "tempt the taste." This somewhat ambiguous situation is clarified in the two final stanzas of the section:

For ADORATION all the paths
Of grace are open. (I, LXX)

This can have two meanings; grace is administered through the correct use of all the senses ("all the paths"), or, grace is freely available to the man who cleanses himself: "...all the baths, / Of purity refresh." In either case, the senses are to be triumphed over:

And all the rays of glory beam
To deck the man of God's esteem,
Who triumphs o'er the flesh. (I, LXX)

The reader is thus prepared for the conclusion of the Adoration stanzas:

For ADORATION, in the dome
Of CHRIST, the sparrow's find an home;
And on his olives perch:
The swallow also dwells with thee,
O man of God's humility,
Within his Saviour CHURCH. (I, LXXI)

Nature adores because it has been restored through Christ to its original innocence, and man's ultimate concerns should not be of the things of this world.

All the minor yet related themes which Smart has been weaving together are present in the ecstatic conclusion of the poem, where he reverts to the major theme of eulogizing David. He uses five adjectives for the purpose--sweet, strong, beauteous, precious, and glorious--each one controlling a group of three stanzas. The pattern in each group is the same. The first two stanzas describe natural things which are sweet, strong, beauteous, etc., and the third describes a sweeter, stronger, more beauteous characteristic of David. The repetition of the operative word is varied skilfully so as not to become monotonous, until in the final group "glorious" is repeated at the beginning of every line for the first two stanzas. The structure, which earlier in the poem inexorably pushed the reader forward, now forces him to increase his pace until it becomes a head-long rush. The last stanza slightly reduces the pace, as it concludes with the stately "DETERMINED, DARED, and DONE."

The use of the five adjectives should come as no surprise to the reader, as all of them form part of the preceding pattern. Earlier references to David's music used both "sweet" and "strong":

O strength, O sweetness, lasting ripe!
 God's harp thy symbol, and thy type
 The lion and the bee! (I, XXXVIII)

The whole poem is a catalogue of the beauties of Nature, and the preciousness of Nature to Smart and of David to God is evident throughout. And "glorious" is simply the

logical and emotional culmination of all that has gone before in the poem.

This section reflects in miniature some of the patterns of the rest of the poem. For example, the earliest simple glorification of the beauty of Nature was skillfully replaced by the glorification of spiritual things in the exercise on the senses. In the same way, the catalogue of all that is sweet, strong, etc., in Nature is finally replaced at the very end by the glory of salvation.

The five stanzas devoted to David also form a progression in which he is more and more closely identified with Christ, and so reflects the larger pattern of the whole poem. Stanza LXXIV merely recounts the sweetness of his music, stanza LXXVII identifies him as "the man of pray'r," stanza LXXX pictures the king on his knees, and stanza LXXXIII identifies David's heart with the Lord's. And the final stanza majestically concludes:

Glorious,--more glorious, is the crown
Of Him that brought salvation down,
By meekness, called thy Son.

This comparison of David with Christ is not a sudden, capricious thing. It is the culmination of Smart's adulation of David, and also finally fuses the Old (David) and New (Christ) Testaments. Thus, even as Christ's redeeming work contributes to the harmony of the Hymns and Spiritual Songs, so the figure of Christ contributes to that of "A Song to David."

Some perspective may be added to this detailed study of the concinnity of the poem by stepping back and looking at it as a whole. Smart begins, naturally enough, by praising David, demonstrating his worthiness to be praised, and listing the subjects of his poetry. Then he reveals, in the stanzas on the Creation, the spiritual significance, not only of the subject of David's poetry, but of all things, and thus broadens the scope and application of the poem. Smart thus advances from praising David to the subject of praise in general. He then emphasizes the point that godliness is a requisite for praising God, and so brings David back into the center of attention; he, as the best man, is the most worthy leader of praise to God.

All of this prepares the way for the Adoration stanzas. The reason for praise has been given (Creation is filled with the presence of God) as well as the requirements for praising (godliness). Thus this section, describing Creation's praise of God, could conceivably have formed the conclusion of the poem, but Smart has more to say. In the final seven Adoration stanzas, and in the final fifteen stanzas of the poem, Smart makes it very clear that the adoration of all things is not so important, is not so sweet, strong, beautiful, precious, or glorious as heavenly things and heavenly values:

Beauteous, yea beauteous more than these,
The shepherd king upon his knees. (I, LXXX)

The most glorious thing, the thing most worthy of man's

adoration and gratitude is "...the crown / Of Him that brought salvation down." (I, LXXXVI) And the person on whose head this crown sits is David's son.

Thus the conclusion is not merely an emotional one, devoid of rational resolution. Of course the ending does produce an emotional reaction: the repetition and declamatory statement create an almost incantatory, ecstatic effect. But there is at the same time a resolution of the themes of the poem: it begins at one point and ends, not at the same point, but at another. The poem is, then, a unity, structural, thematic, and stylistic. J. Middleton Murry has declared: "Not to know the "Song to David" as a whole is in a very real sense not to know it at all."¹ He is, of course, absolutely right.

¹Murry, op. cit., p. 184.

CONCLUSION

It should be quite obvious by now that the two basic questions of Smartian criticism (the excellence of "A Song to David" within the bulk of the mediocrity of his verse, and the significance and effect of his confinement for madness) are inextricably linked together. When Smart went to the madhouse in 1756 he was a versifier adept in many poetic forms, but had produced little of lasting merit. The time spent in confinement forced him to take stock of his poetry, and gave him the opportunity to pursue poetic styles and theories the commercial, competitive nature of Grub Street had denied him.

Far and away the most fruitful result of this confinement was the concept of "identity" Smart articulated and experimented with in Jubilate Agno, the work composed during his seclusion. This concept holds that, because all created things are spiritually equal (although physically different), in some respects individual properties, although peculiar to one creature, can become the property of another, dissimilar creature. The effect this has on Smart's poetry is considerable. Anything and

everything is brought into his hymns of praise, individual objects assume special importance, and Nature reverts to the innocence of Eden. Smart catches the essence of the vision in Isaiah:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.
 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.
 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.
 (11:6-9)

It is not, however, merely an Old Testament vision. It is Christ who brings salvation to man and innocence back to created things, as the Hymns and Spiritual Songs and "A Song to David" make clear.

Another aspect of "identity" greatly affects the style of the confinement and post-confinement poetry. This is the identity between word and thing. Words (and ideas) have as much reality, as much substance, as objects, and so words and things become one, identical. The effect of this on Smart's diction and imagery is easy to imagine: superfluous words are jettisoned, language becomes concrete and clear, and metaphors are completely identified with their subject.

All of this means that Smart's later poetry is not merely an outgrowth of his earlier poetry, although it

is that, but is quite different from his earlier work in several ways. It also means that the later work is much better than the earlier work, and that at times in the later poetry (in some of the Hymns and in "A Song to David") Eliot's "lines" of technical mastery and vital personal experience meet to result in the creation of great poetry.

No one would wish the conditions and methods of eighteenth century insane asylums on anyone, but the fact remains, as this study has demonstrated, that had it not been for his confinement in those asylums, Smart probably would not have written the exquisite lines found in Jubilate Agno, would not have formed the simple unity of the Hymns and Spiritual Songs, and would not have constructed the sweet and strong harmony of "A Song to David."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

- Smart, C. The Collected Poems of Christopher Smart.
2 vols., ed. N. Callan. London: Routledge and Kegan
Paul Ltd., 1949.
- _____. Jubilate Agno. ed. W.H. Bond. London: Rupert
Hart-Davis, 1954.
- _____. Rejoice in the Lamb. ed. W.F. Stead. New York:
Henry Holt and Company, 1939.
- _____. "A Song to David," in Eighteenth Century Poetry.
ed. P.M. Spacks. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall,
Inc., 1964.
- _____. "A Song to David," in The Late Augustans. ed.
D. Davie. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958.

B. SECONDARY SOURCES: BOOKS

- Ainsworth, E. and Noyes, C. Christopher Smart. University
of Missouri Studies XVIII, No. 4, 1943.
- Blake, W. Complete Writings. ed. G. Keynes. London:
Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Blaydes, S. Christopher Smart as a Poet of His Time.
Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966.
- Browning, R. The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert
Browning. 7 vols. New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.,
1890.
- Clifford, J.L. (ed.). Eighteenth Century English Liter-
ature. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Dearnley, M. The Poetry of Christopher Smart. London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968.

Devlin, C. Poor Kit Smart. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961.

Grigson, G. Christopher Smart. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1961.

The Holy Bible, King James Version.

Murry, J.M. Discoveries. London: W. Collins and Sons and Co., Ltd., 1924.

Pound, E. Selected Poems. 2d. ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1959.

Sherbo, A. Christopher Smart: Scholar of the University. Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967.

Spacks, P.M. The Poetry of Vision. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Sutherland, J. A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.

Tillyard, E.M.W. The Elizabethan World Picture. London: Chatto & Windus, 1943.

Wiley, B. The Eighteenth-Century Background. London: Chatto & Windus, 1940.

C. SECONDARY SOURCES: ARTICLES, REVIEWS, AND ABSTRACTS

Abbott, C.D. "Christopher Smart's Madness," Publications of the Modern Language Association. XLV, 1930, 1014-1022.

Adams, F.D. "The Major Religious Poems of Christopher Smart," Dissertation Abstracts. XXVII, 1966, 196A.

Binyon, L. "The Case of Christopher Smart," English Association Pamphlet. XC, 1934, 1-20.

Brittain, R. "Christopher Smart and Dr Delany," Times Literary Supplement. 7 March 1936, 204.

Fitzgerald, R.F. "The Form of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno," Studies in English Literature. VIII, 1968, 487-499.

Friedman, J.B. "The Cosmology of Praise: Smart's Jubilate Agno," Publications of the Modern Language Association. LXXXII, 1967, 250-256.

- Greene, D.J. "Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets," Journal of the History of Ideas. XIV, 1953, 327-352.
- Havens, R.D. "The Structure of Smart's Song to David," Review of English Studies. XIV, 1938, 178-182.
- Hauser, W.R. "An Analysis of the Structure, Influence, and Diction of Christopher Smart's A Song to David," Dissertation Abstracts. XXIV, 1963, 2012-2013.
- Kuhn, A.J. "Christopher Smart: The Poet as Patriot of of the Lord," Journal of English Literary History. XXX, 1963, 121-136.
- Merchant, W.M. "Patterns of Reference in Smart's Jubilate Agno," Harvard Library Bulletin. XIV, 1960, 20-26.
- Parish, C. "Christopher Smart's Knowledge of Hebrew," Studies in Philology. LVIII, 1961, 516-532.
- _____. "Smart's Pillars," Modern Language Quarterly. XXIV, 1963, 158-163.
- Rogers, K.M. "The Pillars of the Lord: Some Sources of A Song to David," Philological Quarterly. XL, 1961, 525-534.
- Saltz, R.D. "'Scope for Wonder and for Love': The Religious Poetry of Christopher Smart," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII, 1967, 2694A-2695A.
- Spacks, P.M. "Wit and Madness," Yale Review. LVII, 1968, 285-290.
- Teevan, T.F. "A Study of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno," Dissertation Abstracts. XVIII, 1958, 224-225.
- Williamson, K. "Christopher Smart's Hymns and Spiritual Songs," Philological Quarterly. XXXVIII, 1959, 413-424.