“All the World in Ev’ry Corner”: Community, the Individual and God in George Herbert’s *The Temple*

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the interrelation of community, the individual and God in the work of the seventeenth-century poet and priest George Herbert. Through a close analysis of poems selected from the first two sections of Herbert's book, *The Temple*, I explore the emphasis Herbert places on how various communities and individuals help one another to advance their relationship with God. Community is portrayed within *The Temple* as a guiding force for the individuals that exist within it, while at the same time various revered individuals act within Herbert's poetry to lead the entire Christian community to God. Human community is additionally explored in Herbert's poetry as an important construct in the eyes of God, not only because it was placed by Him to guide the more wayward members of humanity towards Him, but because of the desire He feels to be loved by the community He has created.

In Memoriam

Dariusz Artur Dokurno

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Introduction

Cho. Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,
My God and King.
--"Antiphon (I)," lines 1-2[1]

Defined loosely as "A body of people or things viewed collectively" (OED), community is an intensely dynamic term that can be applied to a virtually infinite variety of human amalgamations. The chorus of the poem "Antiphon (I)" identifies three general grades of human community that George Herbert must naturally and intimately have been concerned with, both as a devotional poet and as a priest in Bemerton. In the most encompassing sense, "Antiphon (I)" establishes humankind *en masse* in a collective light by attempting to incite "all the world in ev'ry corner" to worship God as the supreme deity and creator of all things. More restrictively, it also distinguishes the Christian community, with the word "let" implying something still to happen in the future and thus differentiating those who do not yet sing the holy chorus of "My God and King" from those who do. This classification of Christians as a unified whole is innately ironic given the lack of cohesion among seventeenth-century religious factions; the future envisioned by the chorus' use of the word "let" can thus be taken to indicate not only a general unification of humanity as a whole beneath the hand of God, but also as a more specific indication of the eventual confederation of all Christians. Finally, "Antiphon (I)" identifies the much more nuclear community of the congregation, for the poem itself is titled after a style of song to be sung in church. This thesis will explore how the individual Christian has been situated by Herbert in relation to these three configurations

[1] All quotes from *The Temple* are taken from Helen Wilcox's edition of Herbert's poetry. (Herbert, George. *The English Poems of George Herbert*. Ed. Helen Wilcox. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.)

of community in *The Temple* and, ultimately, will investigate the relationship of the individual and these communities to God.

The term "community" carries a great deal of ecclesiastical baggage, and a discussion of the place of community in George Herbert's work must necessarily acknowledge, even if briefly, the historical and contemporary debates about religious community, both in the seventeenth century in general and Herbert's poetry in particular. As Achsah Guibbory discusses extensively in her excellent study of the topic, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-century England,* these debates have much to do with the heated disputes in the seventeenth century between the Laudian emphasis on ceremony and the sense of community it inspires, and the Puritan and anti-ceremonialist insistence on the blasphemy thereof. As Guibbory points out in her chapter on Herbert, both the religious upheaval of the seventeenth century and the wide appeal of Herbert's poetry have led to his "appropriation[]" (44) by and into various religious communities over the centuries (44-45). Although I find discussions of Herbert's religious alignment and precise theological leanings to be both interesting and important, I feel that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to debate what others have already done so thoroughly and competently. I tend to agree with Guibbory, who argues that Herbert's work, rather than exhibiting particular inclinations towards one side or the other, instead articulates "the deeply conflicted *via media* of the seventeenth-century English church" (45) and that we as readers "are closest to the spirit of his poetry when we recognize its contradictory impulses" (78). While this thesis is concerned with how human life is conducted in the presence of others and of God rather than with identifying the influences of specific religious traditions or communities upon Herbert's poetry, and thus does not necessitate meticulous attention to

the distinctions outlined by Guibbory, my reading of Herbert is nonetheless often based upon an assumption of Herbert's ambiguity.

This thesis will examine Herbert's portrayal of community by looking carefully, in three chapters, at various portions of *The Temple*. In the first chapter, "'I Grow Among Thy Trees': Community as a Pathway to God," I will be concerned with the most insular of the three communities identified in "Antiphon (I)" – the congregation, or more precisely, those members of community that one might expect to find in a congregation such as the family, teachers, priests and friends who most immediately surround the individual Christian. I will examine the effect that these members of community have upon the relationship between the individual and God and will explore how this community has been fashioned by God for the function of shaping the individual and assisting him or her in growing closer to God. On a more ancillary level, this chapter will also strive to defend the place of "The Church-Porch" within *The Temple* and its connection and relevance to "The Church" by highlighting some of the similar passages between them.

Both the second and the third chapters will address more general ideas of community, including the community of those who accept the sacrifice and divinity of Christ – that is, the Christian community – and the human community as a whole. Whereas the first chapter will address the influence that an immediate community has on the life and spiritual progress of the individual, the second chapter, "Mary's Army: The Individual and Community as Anagrams," will examine the influence that a single person can have upon an entire population. Additionally, rather than looking at the interaction between an individual and a community that is contemporary to that individual as in the first chapter, in this chapter I will look at the connection that later communities feel to the

individuals whose lives are chronicled in the Bible. Drawing on Herbert's concern with typology and the imitation of Christ, I will suggest that figures such as the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Joseph and Aaron come to symbolize the Christian community and can play a crucial role in leading future generations to accept the salvation offered by Christ.

Finally, in the third chapter, "'From Loving Man': Human Value and the Abandonment of God," I will bring to the fore the member of the community-individual-God trinity who has featured more quietly in the first two chapters. Although the goal of the first two chapters is to outline Herbert's understanding of how individuals and communities can help to bring one another closer to God, the third chapter will concentrate more directly on Herbert's depiction of God's relationship with the human community. I will juxtapose God's incomparable love for humankind and humanity's callous treatment of Christ at the time of His crucifixion in order to emphasize Herbert's portrayal of the incomprehensible yet intrinsic value that God places on humanity and his recognition that the loss of human community is a striking blow to God.

Chapter 1

"I Grow Among Thy Trees": Community as a Pathway to God

I blesse thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit and order OW.
--"Paradise," lines 1-3

With any stanza of George Herbert's poem "Paradise," the eye is naturally drawn to the words that conclude each line; both their typographic distinctiveness and their nature as imperfect anagrams set them apart. In the first stanza, quoted in the epigraph above, the word "grow" is eventually pared down to its smallest component part, and not simply in that the word "ow" is physically located within it. Any physical or spiritual growth that the speaker undergoes is directly contingent upon what he "ows" to God: he both "ows" fruit and order to God in an act of reciprocity, however insufficiently human, for the many blessings he has received, and "ows" (ie, can attribute) any fruit that he bears and any "order" or organization that he experiences to God. However, there is a second word ("row") physically contained within the word "grow," and thus a second dynamic that is brought to bear upon the speaker's growth. It is largely from this that my discussion in this chapter springs. The shift that Herbert makes, precisely midway through the verse, expands the single "I" of the poem's speaker to include a multitude of other "trees." Therefore, Herbert's speaker does not grow alone, but rather grows within a "row" of countless others who also lift their hearts to God. Because the words "grow" and "ow" are so closely and obviously related, what I propose to examine in this chapter is the similarly close relationship between the words "grow" and "row." Precisely, how

does the presence of a human community contribute to the spiritual growth of the individual?

Approximately half of the verses that I will consider in addressing this question come from "The Church," which stands as the second section and main body of Herbert's tripartite book of poetry, *The Temple*. The rest are lines from *The Temple's* long introduction, "The Church-Porch." Many critics have explored the differences between the two. "The Church," consisting of 162 distinct religious lyrics, is touted by many to be one of the finest works in the English language and to contain many rich layers of sacred wisdom. "The Church-Porch," which contains only 2 poems – one a long poem of 462 lines, bearing the same title, the other a shorter, eight line poem named "Superliminare" – is instead described as "didactic and aphoristic" (Wilcox 49)[2] and is considered to be "limited for the most part to the norms of social and civil decorums" (Fish 128). Despite these differences, however, both the subtitle of "The Church-Porch" ("Perirhanterium") and the placement of "Superliminare," which precedes "The Church" but yet stands outside the main portion of "The Chuch-Porch," suggest a connection between the two sections. In Greek, the word "perirhanterium" signifies "a sprinkling brush used in ritual cleansing before a ceremony" (Wilcox 63). Meanwhile, "superliminare" is Latin for the word "lintel" (85), and the poem enjoins the reader, "whom the former precepts [of "The Church-Porch"] have / Sprinkled and taught" (1-2), to "approach, and taste / The churches mysticall repast" (3-4). The advice given in "The Church-Porch," then, while often of a secular nature, is meant to help curb the natural (and often wicked) impulses of

[2] All references to Wilcox are to her notes and remarks in her edition of Herbert's poems. (Herbert, George. *The English Poems of George Herbert*. Ed. Helen Wilcox. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.)

humankind so that the reader can approach the text of "The Church" (as well as enter the physical church itself) with a cleaner heart.

For many critics, these explanations do not fully justify the differences in tone between "The Church" and "The Church-Porch." Richard Strier argues that while "The Church-Porch" certainly discusses what he calls "Christian behaviour," it nonetheless "is not concerned with the love or service of God at all" (*Resistant Structures* 93), two things that are of enormous import within "The Church." Instead, Strier maintains that the moral behind "The Church-Porch" is that individual gain is paramount and that "The poem contains no vision of community" (103). Not all critics, however, are as dismissive in their assessment. Gene Edward Veith Jr. takes the opposite view, arguing that many of the precepts in "The Church-Porch" do indicate the presence of God and the significance of community to the individual Christian. While I agree with Strier that the tone of "The Church-Porch" differs from that of "The Church" and that much of the speaker's advice in this poem is concerned with advancing the self within secular society, I find Veith's comments regarding the presence of God and community within its lines to be closer to the spirit of the poem:

> Herbert does avoid, though, moralism that is merely bourgeois and self-serving. The presence of God, though at a distance, looms behind the precepts – children should be raised with care because they are God's image (102); in giving alms to the poor one can "joyn hands with God to make a man to live" (376). The secular advice on lust, drinking, swearing, and wealth is given a deeper resonance because the poet leaves no doubt that at stake is the eternal soul. God is the author of moral law, however secular or limited its concerns. (58)

Rather than focusing on the differences between "The Church" and "The Church-Porch," then, I will instead trace out their similarities in theme and content.

In the following pages, I will develop a perspective on the important role that community plays in Herbert's poetic representation of the individual's spiritual

development and relationship with God. In many of Herbert's poems, we see that the presence of community can be used to temper the sinful nature of humankind; in effect, community prepares a pathway to God, providing various tools that allow the individual to better prepare him or herself in the ongoing quest to be worthy of the Lord's sacrifice and love. I will examine the relationship between community and the spiritual growth of the individual in two sections. In the first, I will begin by exploring the primacy of the relationship between the individual and God and how human community fits into this relationship. Provided by God, community not only sets boundaries to disassociate the individual from the inherently sinful nature of humankind, but also acts as a conscience to help judge the behaviour of the individual. In the second section, I will consider both the duties that the individual in turn has to other members of the community, and the perils to which community potentially subjects the individual. In the end, while community is a critical instrument in shaping the individual and his or her spiritual development, care must be taken to avoid being influenced by community in the wrong ways.

I.

There can of course be no illusions as to which relationship *The Temple* is ultimately concerned with, and despite the general focus of this thesis on human community, I do not mean to suggest that this is the relationship between individual and community. As Richard Strier so succinctly summarizes in his book *Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry*, the main body of Herbert's text serves as "the record and the dramatization of a single I-thou relationship" (166). This relationship – the one between the individual and God – is the single most important relationship in existence for Herbert. No being in heaven or on earth can hold more love

for the individual man or woman than does the God who died for them; reciprocally, or at least ideally, no man or woman should love anyone or anything as absolutely as the Lord. The supremacy of the relationship between human and God, as well as the emotional anguish that arises from humankind's inability to properly reciprocate God's unwavering love, is illuminated in many of Herbert's most tortured poems. In "Unkindnesse," Herbert's speaker castigates himself for his ungrateful – even callous – treatment of God. For all that the speaker loves God and yearns to become closer to Him, the realization made in the last line of the poem stands true: "*Yet use I not my foes, as I use thee*" (25, original emphasis). Because of sins that he has personally committed, Herbert's speaker has caused his beloved Lord to suffer horrors so unimaginable and indescribable that he would not be able to bring himself to wish them upon his direst enemy. Having done so, Herbert's speaker then adds insult to literal injury: he repeatedly shuns the Lord's gift, rebels against His edicts, and allows mortal friends and concerns to "displace" (19) the Lord within his heart. In short, he altogether fails to prove himself worthy of God's sacrifice and unconditional love.

"Unkindnesse" makes it very clear that no mortal friendship or relationship can be equivalent to that which exists between the individual and God. Midway through the poem, the speaker declares: "I *cannot* use a friend, as I use Thee" (15, emphasis added). In one sense, Herbert's speaker is simply reinforcing the injustice of his treatment of Christ, echoing previous lines that state "I would not use a friend, as I use Thee" (5) and "I could not use a friend, as I use Thee" (10). In another sense, however, he is also acknowledging the inimitable relationship that exists between the individual and God. Herbert's speaker literally *cannot* use any mortal friend in the way he uses Christ because no mortal friend has the ability to redeem his sins, thus assuring forgiveness and life-

everlasting. Thus, Herbert's title takes on multiple meanings, as many of his titles so often do. Not only is Herbert's speaker being "unkind" towards God through his treatment of Christ, his speaker is also acknowledging the fact that his relationship with God is of a different kind than his relationship with human friend or foe. This, in turn, is because the speaker himself is of a different kind – human-kind, not God-kind – than his Lord.

However, while Herbert's speaker unerringly recognizes that he cannot so use the friends that he ironically treats better than God, he never states unequivocally: "I cannot use a friend *at all*." Human companionship, no matter how much it pales in comparison to God's love and presence within the speaker's heart, is not, so to say, completely useless. In fact, the theme of use in "Unkindnesse" can be seen as an echo of the same theme in a verse from "The Church-Porch" in which Herbert states exactly the opposite, instructing the individual that he or she should "Scorn no mans love, though of a mean degree" (349) nor "make any one thine enemie" (351) because "The cunning workman never doth refuse / The meanest tool, that he may chance to use" (353-354). There are three workmen in play here, or three levels on which the term "cunning workman" can be understood. First, the individual human is a workman who uses the love and presence of other humans to further his or her spiritual progression and thus his or her relationship with God in various ways that I will shortly explore. Humans, riddled by sin as they are, might make "mean" or weak tools, but they are still tools nonetheless and, handled appropriately, can still be of great use. Second, God can be considered the ultimate workman through His creation of the earth and humankind. If God, in His infinite wisdom, has seen fit to provide the individual with tools of a "kind" with themselves – that is, to surround the individual with a community of other individuals to help guide his

or her way – what right does the individual have to scorn the use of that community, however inferior humans might appear to be? Third, having been placed by God to help the individual become closer to Him, the community itself, in the end, becomes the workman laboriously constructing the individual's pathway to God.

Herbert's poem "Sinne (I)," which bears distinct similarities to "The Church-Porch" in its concerns with social relationships and civil laws, provides an explicit look at precisely how the community that God has provided works to shape the individual:

> Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round!
> Parents first season us: then schoolmasters
> Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
> To rules of reason, holy messengers,
>
> Pulpits and sundayes, sorrow dogging sinne,
> Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
> Fine nets and strategems to catch us in,
> Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
>
> Blessings beforehand, tyes of gratefulnesse,
> The sound of glorie ringing in our eares:
> Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
> Angels and grace, eternall hopes and fears.
>
> Yet all these fences and their whole array
> One cunning bosome-sinne blows quite away.

In the very first line of the poem, Herbert's speaker encapsulates, within a single word, one of the greatest problems that afflict humankind and the solution that God has provided for it. Humans are surrounded by infinite "care[s]," including endless secular temptations and distractions, but God has also enveloped humans with great "care" so that they will not be entirely susceptible to sin. The themes of sin and God's protective "care," incidentally, are so closely entwined for Herbert that they appear as well in the second poem in *The Temple* bearing the title "Sinne," in which Herbert's speaker declares that "God more care of us hath had" (6) in protecting humans from being able to see sin

directly (Wilcox 230). As “Sinne (I)” progresses past its first line, Herbert’s speaker then goes on to describe a number of the safeguards that God has put into place to guide the individual towards Him. “Parents” and “Schoolmasters,” “pulpits” and “sundayes,” “laws” and “rules of reason” – all of these have been provided by the Lord to sculpt the individual into something that is (more or less) pleasing to Him, and all of them are in some way related to community. “Parents” and “schoolmasters” stand as members of the individual’s inner circle of community, those who typically have the most influence on the individual’s formative years; “pulpits” and “sundayes” imply communal worship in a church setting; and “laws” and “rules of reason” are, while often set down by God, interpreted and enforced by various members of society. The system that God has designed is set up to preclude as much malfunction as possible with its precise structure. The individual moves strictly and promptly from home to school to church, each of which adds its authority in influencing and moulding the individual.

In the shaping process that is described within “Sinne (I),” the individual is largely passive. There is a pervading imagery of physical restraint or confinement throughout the poem. Individuals are sent “bound / To rules of reason,” are caught within “fine nets” and held by “tyes of gratefulnesse.” They exist to be acted upon by the community, to be “season[ed],” “delivere[ed]” and “sorted.” The very form of “Sinne (I)” contributes to this theme. The lines of the poem are bound into the strict form of a sonnet, many of them heavy with enjambment (“Parents first season us: then schoolmasters / Deliver us to laws) to bend them into compliance. Additionally, many of the phrases are very carefully balanced; ideas or images are rarely left to stand alone, but rather are more firmly established, perhaps even stabilized, by an additional image provided alongside it by Herbert’s speaker. Take, for instance, the fifth line of the poem. The image of “pulpits”

is rounded out by the addition of the word "sundayes," which combine together to form a clearer image of God's day of rest and spiritual ministry. Not only is the word "pulpits" balanced by "sundayes," however; this combined image is then further balanced out by the image of "sorrow dogging sinne," or of the individual feeling remorse over the sins that he or she must confront in the face of the priest's sermon at the pulpit every Sunday.

Many of the images of binding within "Sinne (I)" are linked directly to the achievement of knowledge or correct behaviour. Such is the case in the image referenced above, where the individual is sent "bound" by "parents" and "Schoolmasters" to church and the spiritual messages that he or she will hear there, as well as in the reference to the "millions of surprises" that he or she will discover in the "bibles laid open" to which they are compelled. This link between binding and moral education (or education in general) is strongly reminiscent of early modern humanist representations of the teacher as a gardener who binds the student/individual so that he or she will grow into the proper form, a tendency that Rebecca W. Bushnell traces in *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*. She explores "Erasmus's strategy" (93) for educating young minds, explaining his belief that "From the first the proper must harden into habit, preferably through emulation, just as a vine is bound to a tree" (95). She goes on to explain that "For Erasmus, such shaping transformed the young child from nothing into something human and useful" (95). Thus, the binding-like actions of the community as described in "Sinne (I)" are meant to shape the individual into something new and more pure, something that will be more useful to both God and the community in turn. Further, the intertwined images of binding and gardening also recall the lines from "Paradise" with which this chapter opened. The trees, each representing an individual, are bound into a "row" and thus bound into community with one another. The very

nature of a "row" implies order and consistency – each successive tree helps to determine the physical location in which the next must be planted and will "grow," for anything else would signal complete and utter disarray.

Despite all of the structure that has been established heretofore in "Sinne (I)," there is, of course, a major problem that arises in the form of Herbert's concluding couplet. Ironically for a poem that addresses the process of binding an individual to the moral laws and behaviours expected of him or her, the couplet of "Sinne (I)," rather than tying everything neatly together, instead leaves the individual lost, naked and defenceless amidst the vagaries of sin. Bushnell goes on to state that "The question of how much the teacher controls the child's nature plays into a more general debate over whether 'property' or the nature of any living thing can be altered" (103), and this question is apparent in the concluding lines of "Sinne (I)." All of the "[de]fences" that the community's binding and guidance have provided to protect the individual from his or her own sinful nature are "blow[n] quite away" by one single, "cunning bosome-sinne," because, in the end, humankind's true nature *is* sinful. No matter how much that nature is restrained and educated it is still, at the core, unalterably degenerate and corrupt. The couplet is bursting with images of war; a garrison has been erected, with "fences" or defences constructed and soldiers "arrayed." And yet, in the end, this siege of bonds and moral laws is not enough to starve the sinful nature out of the individual. In a surprising reversal, all of these fortifications are "blow[n]" apart by the very thing the siege has been set to destroy.

From this last line of the poem, then, in which all of the defences that God, through community, has provided for the individual are dismantled, I will return to the first line of the poem. "Lord," Herbert's speaker declares, "with what care hast thou

begirt us round!" The operative word here is "round" – all of the defences listed above are defences that God has constructed *around* the individual, which is to say, *outside* of the individual. As stated above, Herbert's speaker is largely passive throughout "Sinne (I)." What he almost entirely fails to address is the way in which all of the defences that community can provide must be accepted and internalized within the individual. The individual must recognize that God has not only begirt him "round"; God has also constructed community as a defence *within* the individual to aid in deflecting the enormous power that even one single "bosome-sinne" holds to distance him or her from God. I refer here to the conscience, to which Herbert makes an explicit reference when he ponders: "Without, our shame; within, our consciences." On the most basic level this line seems to indicate that shame and the conscience work together for the betterment of the individual, with shame existing outside the physical body as a function of community, the conscience residing within, and both playing their various roles in guiding the individual towards the morally and spiritually correct path. That is, the community outside of the individual, the one that God has constructed "round," acts to shame the individual into acceptable behaviour while the guilty conscience that exists within the individual acts to persuade him or her away from sin.

While the conscience can indeed be viewed as an intensely personal construct existing "within" the individual, I would like to suggest a further reading of this line based on the idea that the conscience can also be linked to community. The very etymology of the word "conscience" suggests that the conscience is somehow tied to community. The Oxford English Dictionary lists "together, together with, [and] in combination" as some of the meanings implied by the prefix *con-*, while *science* is from the Latin *scientia*, or "knowledge." Thus, the word "conscience" leaves us with a sense

of "knowledge together," or knowledge of right and wrong stemming from togetherness and community. When the community's teachings are held as strictly outward defences, they can be so easily dismantled, as seen above, which in turn leads to thoughts or behaviours of a shameful nature. If the community, or at least its laws and rules, are held within the individual's heart, they come to act in a way very similar to the individual's conscience. In order to better be able to combat their "bosome-sinne[s]," the individual must therefore shed the passiveness shown throughout "Sinne (I)" and willingly internalize the defences listed within the poem.

In two verses from "The Church-Porch," to which I will now turn, we see Herbert's speaker emphasize the importance of friendship, love and community as he gives advice on how to use a friend or a community outside of the self as a conscience. According to Ceri Sullivan in *The Rhetoric of Conscience in Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan*, it was not an uncommon practice in early modern times for "people [to turn] to more experienced and learned acquaintances to give advice on moral problems," and she goes on to write that "a troubled person's ethical or doctrinal problem was not seen as an individual matter but one the close community could discuss with interest and knowledge" (14). About midway through "The Church-Porch," Herbert thus instructs the reader:

> Thy friend put in thy bosome: wear his eies
> Still in thy heart, that he may see what's there.
> If cause require, thou art his sacrifice;
> Thy drops of bloud must pay down all his fear:
> But love is lost; the way of friendship's gone,
> Though *David* had his *Jonathon*, *Christ* his *John*. (271-276)

The word "conscience" is not used directly here by Herbert's speaker as it is in "Sinne (I)," but the concept of the conscience is certainly implied and Wilcox makes use of the

term when she clarifies, in her notes to the verse, that "The inner presence of H[erbert]'s friend [...] is not used to satisfy love but to act as a conscience" (76). Despite the proactiveness necessarily suggested by Wilcox's use of the word "act," the role of the friend in protecting against sin is much less active in this verse than the community is in "Sinne (I)." Gone are the images of physical restraint; the individual is instead given agency through the speaker's injunctions to actively "*wear* [the friend's] eies / Still in thy heart." Not only is the individual made much more active through the need to actively don the friend's watchful gaze within the confines of his or her own heart, the word "still" indicates a level of passiveness on the part of the friend. The gaze is intended to be "still," or stationary; its purpose is to watch and to judge, while the power to actively make any necessary decisions based on that gaze is left to the individual.

The friend in this verse from "The Church-Porch" might be less active than the community in "Sinne (I)," but this is not to say that the role played by the friend is any less substantial. Little appears to have been written about this particular verse, and that which has addresses the place and relevance of friendship. Richard Strier considers Herbert's treatment of friendship in these lines to be both "idealistic" and "cynical" (*Resistant Structures* 102), and Michael Piret holds a similar view, arguing that this verse both illustrates "the nonoccurance of true friendship in the modern world" and "defines, with icy prudence, the bounds beyond which friendship must not go" (238). While it is true that friendship in the past, such as that which existed between David and Jonathon or Christ and John, is idealized in a manner that implies sorrow over its disappearance, the value of modern friendship is not wholly discounted. Although, as previously mentioned, Wilcox argues that the speaker's advice to place "Thy friend [...] in thy bosome" is not directly an injunction to love the friend but rather to allow him or her to judge the

reader's thoughts and actions, Herbert's choice of the word "bosome," and later the word "heart," in a verse that speaks of friendship cannot help but imply the concept of love. Thus, despite what Strier and Piret consider to be the deterioration of friendship since biblical times, the individual is advised to keep the friend's eyes "still" in their heart. Here, the word "still" expands from its suggestion of "motionless" as discussed above, additionally taking on the meanings of "nonetheless" (ie, despite the altered nature of friendship), "unmoving" (ie, to treat the institution of friendship as if it is unchanged from previous ages), and "always" (ie, to never forget the benefits of friendship). If the individual is able to do this he or she will be able to approach moral complications from a perspective additional to, and potentially more objective than, their own.

Later in "The Church-Porch," we encounter another stanza in which Herbert approaches the combined themes of community, love, and the conscience. In an exposition on the topic of prayer, Herbert's speaker asserts a decided preference for prayer performed in public rather than in private:

> Though private prayer be a brave designe,
> Yet publick hath more promises, more love:
> And love's a weight to hearts, to eies a signe.
> We all are but cold suitors; let us move
> Where it is warmest. Leave thy six and seven;
> Pray with the most: for where most pray, is heaven. (397-402)

In these lines, Herbert's speaker shows us that there are rewards to be had from being in the physical presence of a community. In a study of public devotion, Ramie Targoff writes regarding this verse that "This vision of the advantages of collective prayer [shows] a sense of the enormous comfort one experiences when surrounded by fellow worshippers; the "love" that is aroused by praying publicly spreads contagiously when witnessing its presence in others" (96-97). Therefore, each individual alone is a "cold"

suitor, a word that provokes visions of loneliness and stunted growth, both physical and spiritual; we are thus presented with a reverse image of what we saw in “Paradise,” where the individual is both surrounded by others and blessed by abundant growth. As this verse from “The Church-Porch” moves forward, however, it begins to parallel “Paradise” by suggesting that in the presence of others, the emotion of love – love expressed for God through prayer and praise, love for other members of the surrounding “public” – is experienced so strongly that it promotes a feeling of “warm[th]” more conducive to growth. In the very next line, Herbert’s speaker strengthens his description of the benefits of love and community by declaring that “love’s a weight to hearts.” By being a “weight,” love acts as a steadying influence within the individual’s life, performing a duty similar to that of a ship’s anchor. This metaphor is particularly apt because, as we will see in the poem “Miserie” in the second section, Herbert’s speaker uses a ship, or a “sick toss’d vessel” (76), as a metaphor for the self. The love that results from the presence of others can help the individual to stand firmly when buffeted by the debilitating weaknesses that attend humanity’s proclivity for sin, thus acting in much the same way as the conscience.

II.

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, Herbert indicates repeatedly within *The Temple* that community, as sanctioned by God, can play an integral role in helping the individual to become closer to God. In this second section, I would like to address two interrelated issues prompted by the individual’s reliance on community to further his or her spiritual development. First, just as community figures prominently in the life of the individual, the individual has a responsibility to play a similar role in the

lives of others. And second, because at its heart community is human and therefore fallible, the trustworthiness of community and the enormous cost should community guide the individual in the wrong direction must be considered.

The issue of the individual's responsibility to community is raised in the lines from "The Church-Porch" regarding public prayer with which my examination in the previous section of this chapter concluded. Herbert's speaker advises the reader that "Though private prayer be a brave designe, / Yet publick hath more promises, more love" (398). While the word "promises" indicates, on one level, the gifts or spiritual assistance and growth that the individual receives from the "publick," it also implies "promises" that must be made by the individual to the community. The "love" that exists naturally becomes "more" simply because it must be returned. Just as the community has been fashioned by God to aid the individual, the individual must never forget that he or she exists within that community and is thus required to act in ways that will contribute to the spiritual growth of other individuals. In much the same way, the declaration that "love's a weight to hearts" (399), which was earlier established as indicating that the love of community provides the steadying "weight" of an anchor, can alternately indicate that this love, once accepted, carries with it the burden and responsibility of reciprocation. Of course, classifying love as a "weight" or a burden provokes the image of Christ bearing the burden of human sin for the sake of love. These lines thus contribute to a wider theme of reciprocation in *The Temple* which ultimately leads us back to "Paradise." The speaker of "Paradise" essentially attempts to "blesse" God because God has "bless[ed]" him; in a similar vein, the human individual is advised in "The Church-Porch" to bless others with aid in the manner that he or she has been blessed.

Ultimately, the individual's responsibility to other members of his or her community brings us to the second issue that I wish to discuss in this section. Because any human community is necessarily composed of individuals like the one explored in "Sinne (I)," who is naturally susceptible to sin and requires seemingly endless guidance, other members of a community can potentially hinder the individual's spiritual progress and thus his or her relationship with God. *The Temple*, while containing a number of poems that discuss the importance of community, is also scattered with warnings to the reader. Early within the lines of "The Church-Porch," Herbert's speaker cautions: "Let not a common ruin thee intombe: / Be not a beast in courtesie" (45-46). Although this advice comes from a series of four consecutive verses on the specific topic of drink and drunkenness, it is applicable in a very general sense as well. Whether the "ruin" that Herbert's speaker is so wary of is referred to as "common" because it occurs frequently, is vulgar, or is shared by all of those associated with it, the sentiment is much the same. When others are doing something that they should not be doing, something that could be considered sinful in any way, it is all too easy for the individual to be influenced and to so find him or herself "intombe[d]" along with them. Herbert's speaker goes a step further in a later verse from "The Church-Porch" when he warns the individual to "Feed no man in his sinnes: for adulation / Doth make thee parcell-devil in damnation" (257-258). By joining in the sins committed by others or encouraging others to commit sin, the individual both takes on a role adjacent to the devil in leading humans away from God towards "damnation" and becomes damned for committing sin him or herself.

However, while other members of community can pose significant dangers to the individual, in the end they are only indirect threats to the individual's spiritual growth. Although both of the verses from "The Church-Porch" referenced above state the

possibility of being drawn by others towards sin, in both cases active fault can be laid at the feet of the individual. In the first verse, the individual is warned not to *"let"* the "common ruin [...] intombe" him or her, while in the second verse the individual is advised not to "*feed*" the sins of others, both of which imply decisions actively made by the individual. In a similar vein, the poem "Constancie" describes the "honest" (1) man as he "Who, when he is to treat / With sick folks, women, those whom passions sway, / Allows for that, and keeps his constant way" (26-28), implying that the goal for all men is to actively strive to become the type of individual "[w]hom others faults do not defeat" (29); he must "*allow*" for, and thus prepare for and steel himself against, the temptation of giving in to earthly "passions" or sins.

In the end, then, the greatest danger to the individual is undeniably the individual him or herself, and Herbert makes an explicit reference to this in the poem "Miserie." In the penultimate verse of this poem, Herbert's speaker discusses humankind's original, perfect nature, describing how "at first Man was a treasure" (67). He laments over the fact that humankind was unable to hold onto the "Glorie and grace [that] / Did crown his heart and face" (71-72), and in the final verse of the poem, we see his description of what humankind has descended to:

> But sinne hath fool'd him. Now he is
> A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing
> To raise him to the glimpse of blisse:
> A sick toss'd vessel, dashing on each thing;
> Nay, his own shelf:
> My God, I mean myself. (73-78)

The individual is like a ship "toss'd" about by the waves of his or her own weaknesses. Where the speaker first declares that the ship that is the self is "dash[ed] on each thing," which is to say, "dash[ed]" on each adversity or temptation that arises, he changes his

mind in the very next line and announces, “Nay, his *own* shelf.” It is the speaker’s own sins – the sins of the individual and not of the community – and the speaker’s weakness in not successfully being able to resist committing sin which creates the “shelf” upon which the ship is caught. The last line of the poem, and in particular the word “myself,” indicates two things. First, the speaker has realized that throughout the poem he has not simply been speaking of humankind in general or some individual human in the abstract, but has also been admitting his own weaknesses and shortcomings. Second, and perhaps more important, the “shelf” (and here, Herbert has chosen a word that is significantly only one letter removed from “self”) is not only the sin that exists within the speaker’s heart, but actually *is* the self. By being “sick” or weak enough to succumb to sin and temptation, the individual essentially commits self-sabotage.

While the individual thus appears to be his or her own worst enemy, at the same time the individual can act as his or her own advocate. In “The Church-Porch,” the individual is advised to “Take all into thee; then with equall care / Ballance each dramme of reason, like a potion. / If truth be with thy friend, be with them both” (321-323). The exceeding “care” that the individual must take in deciding who is trustworthy enough to be used, for instance, as his or her own conscience reminds us of the “care” that God has taken, as explored in “Sinne (I),” in providing safeguards for the individual. It is imperative for the individual to recognize just how vital each of the three workmen discussed at the start of the chapter really are. While God and the community both play significant roles in helping the individual to achieve spiritual growth, the individual him or herself is equally important and must take on responsibility for his or her own religious progress. The individual must make the effort to “see what [his/her] soul doth wear”

(146), “Dare to look in [his/her] chest” (147) and “tumble up and downe what [he/she] find’st there” (148).

As we discovered in “Sinne (I),” the meticulous work of both God and the community can set the parameters within which the individual can most ideally become closer to God. From verses in “The Church-Porch,” we have seen the continued importance of community in general and friendship and love in specific in further shaping the individual’s behaviour into something more acceptable to God. The fact that the individual must carefully scrutinize and “ballance” the actions and impulses of other members of his or her community, as we have seen in further verses from “The Church-Porch,” does not completely invalidate the lengths to which that community has gone; it simply means that the individual must actively lend a hand in the arduous construction of his or her pathway to God.

Chapter 2

Mary's Army: The Individual and Community as Anagrams

In publick judgements one may be a nation
And fence a plague, while other's sleep and slumber.
-"An Offering," lines 11-12

Kill me not ev'ry day,
Thou Lord of life; since thy one death for me
Is more then all my deaths can be,
Though I in broken pay
Die over each houre of Methusalems stay.
-"Affliction (II)," lines 1-5

In these lines from "An Offering" and "Affliction (II)," Herbert unites two of the dominant themes of his poetry: the power of Christ to effect the redemption of others through his own physical and emotional anguish, and Herbert's own frequently overwhelming desire to imitate the acts and disposition of his saviour. Although the lines from "An Offering" refer specifically to David's request in *1 Chronicles* that he and his family be allowed to suffer in lieu of the Israeli people, the ultimate subject of this typological reference is Christ; as Wilcox points out in her notes to the poem, "In being prepared to suffer in order to save his people, David anticipates Christ" (511). The suffering that Christ has endured on behalf of the human race is, of course, fundamental to the very concept of Christianity, and is thus remarked upon within *The Temple* from beginning ("Whom God in Baptisme washt with his own blood" ("The Church-Porch" 8)) to end ("And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame [for your sins]?" ("Love (III)" 15)). What makes the two passages in this epigraph distinct from many of the other, more passing, references to Christ's suffering in *The Temple* is the way in which

Herbert so explicitly attempts to delineate the nature and the quantity of His suffering. In "An Offering," Herbert alludes to how the death of "one" (Christ) serves to redeem a "nation" (humanity), while in "Affliction (II)" Christ's death represents the infinite daily deaths that Herbert's speaker feels he himself deserves. In both poems, then, Christ's death is not simply the death of *Christ* – that is, the death of one, individual being. His *one* death, his *single* death, expands to encompass an infinite number of deaths, and in doing so, transforms that one death into the preservation of an infinite number of lives.

Consequently, Herbert draws a distinction in these poems between an active redeemer and the inactive recipients of His redemptive act. While Christ is actively "fenc[ing]" and suffering in "An Offering," the humans He fights for "sleep and slumber," a picture reminiscent of the sleeping disciples who leave Christ alone to prepare for His approaching death in "The Sacrifice." Meanwhile, in "Affliction (II)" Christ's death replaces the requisite death(s) of the speaker and thus renders them wholly unnecessary. At its heart, this distinction implies Herbert's understanding that no individual is ever the only active force within his or her own personal redemption story, that no individual's religious journey can exist within a vacuum – an individual's relationship with God will always be directly impacted by the actions of others. Herbert acknowledges that the most perfect example of this is, of course, Christ, whose conscious and deliberate decision to die upon the cross for all humankind redeems every human being. Christ's actions take effect within each and every single Christian on earth, and His suffering is thus the basis of the Christian community. Herbert's poetry therefore emphasizes that, in looking at the tormented body of Christ, the individual both encounters the death that he or she would have been required to suffer and sees also the promise of their eternal life in Heaven.

Herbert is aware that no human being can ever equal Christ's sacrifice and he is nothing if not forthcoming about his own perceived deficiencies. His speaker's admission in "Affliction (II)" that his own death would be as nothing compared to Christ's, since he is incapable of redeeming even his own self let alone another individual or all of humanity, echoes similar sentiments in earlier poems of *The Temple*. In "The Thanksgiving," he poses a discouraged question – "how then shall I imitate thee, and / Copie thy fair, though bloudie hand?" (15-16) – while in "The Reprisall" he is all too aware that Christ's "eternall glorie" far "outgo[es]" him (10). It is all the more surprising, then, that in "An Offering" Herbert gives to David the honour of acting in a manner comparable to Christ. In freeing the Israeli people from God's wrath, David assumes the weight of a greater community in a manner similar to Christ's assumption of humankind and their sins upon His back. It must of course be noted that David's sacrifice falls far short of Christ's ultimate sacrifice; as the story from *1 Chronicles* goes, the plague that David attempts to shield his people from suffering was sent by God in punishment for one of David's own transgressions against the Lord (21:1-17). But David is not Christ Himself – he is only a type of Christ, and while Carol V. Kaske, in defining typology, writes that "Strictly defined, it is the analogy between two events in salvation history," she also explains that historically "Paul himself had employed typological exegesis in order to read prophecies of Christ into seemingly irrelevant Old Testament history" (16). That is, as Chana Bloch puts it, "This view of history implies [...] progress: the Old means the New, but the New surpasses the Old" (128). Thus, although the circumstances of David's suffering might be far less perfect that Christ's, this failure can be excused because his willingness to suffer for his people is only a prophecy of Christ's

later willingness to suffer on the cross. Just as a prophecy falls short of the vibrancy of the actual event, so too does David's suffering fall infinitely short of Christ's.

While Christ might far "outgo" David, David's prefiguration of Christ is nonetheless successful in the manner most important to this discussion. Like Christ, David's life and actions come to be directly pertinent to the lives of an entire community. Throughout *The Temple*, Herbert returns a number of times to the idea that a single individual can approximate Christ by affecting an entire community. In this chapter, I will examine a series of four poems ("Anagram," "Marie Magdalene," "Joseph's Coat" and "Aaron") in which biblical individuals become potentially relevant to the redemption story of all Christians. Significantly, these are the only four poems in *The Temple* which are titled after biblical individuals (excepting the short lyric "Jesu") for the title of "Anagram," as we will see shortly, is physically arranged on the page to include the Virgin Mary's name.[3] I will argue that in each of these four "name poems," Herbert presents the titled individual as doing what David does by prefiguring Christ's sacrifice and what Christ does, on a necessarily larger scale, by dying to redeem the human race: they come to represent an entire community. I will suggest, based on a reading of "Anagram," that these four individuals become metaphorical anagrams for the Christian community: figures within which this community can be symbolically located, individuals within whom an entire community can begin to comprehend and realize its own salvation.

[3] Although a full discussion of "Jesu" is outside the scope of this chapter, it is interesting to note that, like "Anagram," which is based off of the anagram Mary/Army prompted by the Virgin Mary's name, "Jesu" also possesses a wealth of writing imagery, with the name *Jesu* coming to "spell" (8) the words "*I ease you*" (9).

Herbert uses two recurrent themes to present the biblical individuals in "Anagram," "Marie Magdalene," "Joseph's Coat" and "Aaron" as imitations or "copies" of the Christ we see in "An Offering" and "Affliction (II)": a focus on the body and an imagery of numbers. Thus, I will examine these poems in two sections. In the first section, I will begin with an analysis of "Anagram" that will provide the basis for my examination of the other three poems. I will then turn to Herbert's focus on the physical body and accoutrements of Mary Magdalene, Joseph and Aaron, Herbert's attention to which is significant because of how Christ's sacrifice is so tied to the physical torment of the body. In the second section, I will look at how, in both "Marie Magdalene" and "Joseph's Coat," Herbert employs an imagery of counting and numbers similar to the way in which he totals Christ's suffering in "An Offering" and "Affliction (II)," as well as in poems such as "Good Friday."

I.

"Anagram" holds two distinctions within *The Temple*: it is both the shortest lyric in the entire collection and possesses the most typographically (and, I would argue, thematically) intriguing title. In the index of the 1633 edition, it is referred to as "Anagram of the Virgin Marie" (Wilcox 279) and in the actual poem is split in half to frame the words "Mary" and "Army," the first placed directly above the second and both enclosed by brackets. The poem is laid out thus:

Ana- { MARY
ARMY } *gram.*

How well her name an *Army* doth present,
In whom the *Lord of hosts* did pitch his tent!

Despite its brevity, this poem effectively manages to collapse the distinction between one and many, or individual and community. There are two key individuals mentioned within its lines: Mary and Christ. As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, Christ, upon whom the entire human community is dependent for its salvation and eternal existence, is representative of more than just His individual self. Here, in "Anagram," we not only see Herbert reassert this point; we also see indications of something similar resulting with Mary as well. Crucial to both is Herbert's use and application of the word "army." In *A Reading of George Herbert*, Rosemond Tuve explains that the word "Army" in combination with Mary's name evokes the common biblical and liturgical "image of an army with banners for the Virgin Mary" (138). While the poem certainly presents this image, I would argue that the connection that exists between the word "army" and Christ suggests that Christ is the "army" referred to in this poem. The italicization of both the word "*Army*," a word indicating an array of individuals, and the epithet *"Lord of hosts,"* an appellation referring to a single physical entity (Christ), signals a clear connection between the two. Furthermore, not only can the word "host" be used to denote an army, as is visible on many occasions within the Bible – the Oxford English Dictionary also lists "A victim for sacrifice; a sacrifice (*lit.* and *fig.*): often said of Christ" as an alternative definition. It is quite possible, then, that Herbert intended the "*Lord of hosts*" to be identified by the reader as the only *"arm*y*"* required in the battle against temptation and sin, for He and His sacrifice alone can defeat both sin and death in the hearts of all men and women and thus provide redemption and eternal life. Christ becomes simultaneously the *Lord* of Hosts and the host/army itself, making the actions

and deaths of any other army, as with the speaker's death in "Affliction (II)," wholly unnecessary.

For all that Christ exhibits within the lines of "Anagram" the same qualities that Herbert attributes to Him in "An Offering" and "Affliction (II)," it is Mary – both her name and her body – who "present" Christ to us here. In doing so, Mary also begins to take on this same quality of blurring the distinction between one and many, albeit on a smaller scale wholly dependent upon Christ for its fruition. As Herbert shows us in the title of this poem, the letters of Mary's name can be physically arranged on the page to form the word "army," a word which, as we have already established, can be understood as a reference to Christ. Mary's name is not the only thing in this poem to hold an "army" within it, however; her body does, as well. While pregnant, her body physically holds Christ – Christ the individual, Christ the community – within her womb, a word that is hinted at not only by the similar pronunciation of the words womb and "whom" (2), but also by the womb-like brackets that enclose both "Mary" and "Army" in the title. Louis Leiter, drawing on the many significant implications of the word *"Ana*" (which "suggest[s] the name of the Virgin's mother, St. Anne, the meaning of the word 'Anne,' divine grace, and, finally, in an etymological sense, backwards, throughout, or through") suggests that the womb represented by the brackets can be interpreted as the womb of St. Anne, within which Mary, at one point, existed (543). Concurrently, however, we can also see the bracket-womb as belonging to Mary. Mary's own womb embraces both the unborn Christ (who, as we have seen, is also the "army" which exists both within Mary's name and the womb/brackets in the title) *and* Mary herself, for her own salvation, and therefore her own eternal life, lies within Christ who in turn lies physically within her own body. Thus, like Christ, she comes to possess the lives and eventual salvation of the

entire Christian community within her pregnant body and gives birth to both that community and its salvation when she delivers Christ. In the same way that Christ's tormented body metaphorically spells out the salvation of the entire Christian community, Mary's name and body literally spell out that salvation. If, as Leiter points out, "*Ana*" can be understood as "divine grace," then coupled with the definition of "*gram*," which Leiter tells us "literally means 'writing' and by connotation in this religious context, suggests the Word or Christ" (543), the anagram presented by Mary's name and body can be seen as a writing down and materialization of the divine grace found through Christ.

Of the poems I have chosen to discuss in this chapter, "Anagram" is the one that most visibly blurs the distinction between individual and community. However, in "Marie Magdalene," "Joseph's Coat" and "Aaron" we are provided with three additional figures whose corporeal bodies, like that of the Virgin Mary, come to represent and contain, in whatever small ways they are capable of, the salvation of an entire community. Ultimately, to return to the lines of "The Thanksgiving" quoted in the introduction, however much Herbert's speaker feels he cannot "copie" (16) or imitate Christ with his own body or actions, in these poems he is able to make "copie[s]" of Christ within his poetry. These four poems essentially become an attempt to (de)scribe the bodies of Christ and those who fulfill a similar (albeit lesser) function by displaying and arranging them on the page so that the reader can find indications of his or her own life and deliverance within their lines

In the poem "Marie Magdalene," we can see how a very different woman named Mary comes to physically display the salvation story. Herbert uses Mary's body and posture to indicate not only her adherence to Christ's teachings, but also Christ's ability and willingness to redeem even the most degenerate of souls:

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

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

Deare soul, she knew who did vouchsafe and deigne
To bear her filth; and that her sinnes did dash
Ev'n God himself: wherefore she was not loth,
As she had brought wherewith to stain,
So to bring in wherewith to wash:
And yet in washing one, she washed both.

As with his focus on the Virgin Mary's womb, Herbert refers a number of times to various parts of Mary Magdalene's body, beginning in the first stanza with her "head" (3) and feet (as suggested by the words "trampled" (2) and "tread" (6)). Helen Vendler, in *The Poetry of George Herbert*, refers to the poem "Marie Magdalene" as a failure (161), in part because of the confusion surrounding Herbert's orientation of feet and heads. She argues that "it sounds, at first, as if Jesus' feet had precepts, and second as though Mary's feet could trample precepts, and third as though someone's feet could be worn on one's head" (162). Herbert's imagery of feet, however, is not as haphazard as Vendler's description would make it appear. I would contend that "Marie Magdalene" can be considered a successful poem in that Mary very obviously sets a precedent for all Christians, both in her own time and times to come, to follow and fulfill. In his article "Herbert and Tears," Richard Strier explains that "By focusing on Jesus' feet, Mary was indicating her commitment to following His 'way.' Her true interest was in His steps, not

His feet, and in wiping His feet, she was signifying something about her own spiritual state" (233). We can say, therefore, that Mary is wearing Christ's "way," or his "precepts," as a "jewell on her head," and is thus using Christ's precepts to guide and govern her thoughts (and presumably her actions) while proclaiming to all the people of the world that she follows Christ's path and that they should follow suit.

In the second and third stanzas, Herbert shifts from depicting particular portions of Mary's body to representing Mary as a whole. He refers to her as being "stain'd" (7) and "filth[y]" (14), both times as a way to give a physical manifestation to her otherwise invisible sins and inadequacies. This image of a physically stained and filthy body is set at odds with her status as a "Deare soul" (13) in Christ's estimation. Vendler counts this as another failure of the poem, calling it a "shocking contradiction" (162). It is indeed a contradiction, albeit not one that necessarily indicates failure on the part of the poem; it is, after all, the very same contradiction that characterizes Christianity itself. Mary is "deare" both because Christ has paid dearly in pain and blood to redeem her and because He loves all humans, no matter how inherently depraved they may be. The fact that Mary is loved, however, does not change the fact that she is human and therefore destined to commit countless sins over the course of her life. By definition Mary's sinful nature, or filthiness, does not preclude Christ's unconditional sacrifice and love. Therefore, in being both "filth[y]" and "deare," Mary comes to be an image of all Christians. If she can be redeemed, or "washed" clean of her former rejection of Christ's precepts and her myriad other sins, then anyone can so come to be redeemed as long as they are willing to approach Christ and attempt to "tread" in His footsteps.

The example that Mary presents for all Christians reaches its culmination when we consider the images presented by Mary's "wip[ing]" and "washing" of Christ's feet,

words that suggest a kneeling or a stooping position. Through Herbert's attention to her posture, Mary presents a sort of inverted image of Christ. The physical humility that Mary displays in bending to wash Christ's feet is a reflection of the perfect spiritual humility that He displays in washing her soul, just as the dirt that physically exists upon His feet is a reflection of the spiritual filth conjured by her many sins. Mary knows that her actions in bathing Christ's feet can have no real and lasting effect upon Christ as surely as does Herbert's speaker in his perplexity over why Mary would "strive / To make him clean, who could not be defil'd." But however ultimately useless her actions might be, they nevertheless display the meekness and love that is required of all humans if they are to be redeemed. In showing such humility and meekness in following Christ's way, Mary's body in this poem essentially becomes an inventory of the things that must be done in order to become closer to Christ.

In "Joseph's Coat," Herbert's presentation of the son of Jacob, who in Genesis was sold into slavery by his brothers only to later bring them into Egypt, differs greatly from that of the two Mary's in "Anagram" and "Marie Magdalene." In part this is because, as pointed out by Joseph H. Summers in his foundational book, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art,* Herbert actually evades any direct mention of Joseph within the poem that is titled after him (128):

> Wounded I sing, tormented I indite,
> Thrown down I fall into a bed, and rest:
> Sorrow hath chang'd its note: such is his will,
> Who changeth all things, as him pleaseth best.
>   For well he knows, if but one grief and smart,
> Among my many had his full career,
> Sure it would carrie with it ev'n my heart,
> And both would runne untill they found a biere
>   To fetch the bodie; both being due to grief.
> But he hath spoil'd the race; and giv'n to anguish
> One of Joyes coats, ticing it with relief

> To linger in me, and together languish.
> I live to shew his power, who once did bring
> My *joyes* to *weep*, and now my *griefs* to *sing*.

Joseph is nowhere within the poem itself, and even his coat receives only one "indirect" (Wilcox 547) reference in all fourteen lines. Thus largely naked of idiosyncratic features and allusions, the poem exists without a context to give it any specific application. The way in which the title provides, with only two words, an entire world of context makes it the most interesting feature of the entire poem. Summers puts it most clearly:

> 'Joseph's Coat' [...] concerns the mixture of joy and sorrow in the Christian life, and Joseph is not mentioned in the text. The conclusion [...] is an acknowledgment of God's power, but without the title it might be construed as an acknowledgment of a powerful and inexplicable Fate. The title, a reference to a traditional Christian type, gives Herbert's interpretation of the experience of contradictory joys and sorrows. Joseph's 'coat of many colours' was the sign of his father's particular love. It was also the immediate occasion for his brothers' jealousy and hatred and for his slavery and suffering; but the presentation of the coat was, finally, the initial incident in the long chain of causes which led to the preservation of the Children of Israel in Egypt. After all the suffering, the sign of Jacob's love ended in beatitude. The extraordinary mixture of joy and sorrow in the Christian's life is a particular sign of God's love. Joy has been made 'to *weep*' to forestall that self-sufficience which leads to wilful pride, and '*griefs*' have been made 'to *sing'* to preserve the soul and body from despair and death. (128-129)

Thus, the specific details of Joseph's story, cued for the reader by the title of the poem, are what truly give this poem meaning and transform it from a vague list of mingled sorrows and joys into an exposition on God's love for humankind. Fleshed out by Joseph's story, "Joseph's Coat" allows the Christian reader to build a greater context for his or her own suffering and thus allows the reader to accept the necessity of his or her suffering for the receipt of future joys. Joseph and his coat are not only a type of Christ, with Joseph, like David, suffering for the preservation of his people. Bloch explains that while "the traditional formula [for typology] finds in Christ's life the primary antitype of the Old Testament types, the Protestant exegetes focus on the individual believer, whose

life becomes the stage where the historical drama of promise and fulfillment is played out" (131). Therefore, we can say that Joseph and his coat also become a type for all Christians to fulfill. The Christian reader can use Joseph as a basis for the imperative of submitting to God's often inexplicable will by knowing that, like Joseph, he or she will not come to "rest" alone and discarded upon a "bed" of sorrow and suffering, but will instead be able to achieve their desired "rest" within God's loving presence.

Ultimately, the acceptance of God's will promoted by the figure of Joseph within "Joseph's Coat" returns the reader to the lesson provided by Herbert as early in *The Temple* as "The Thanksgiving" and "The Reprisall," which stand as the third and fourth poems, respectively, of "The Church." Like both of these poems, "Joseph's Coat" contains images of competition, with Herbert's speaker envisioning his "heart" and the "grief" he has suffered being set at odds in a "race" to see which can first bring his "bodie" to its "biere," which is to say, its death. The sense of rivalry described in "Joseph's Coat" at first appears to differ slightly from that in both "The Thanksgiving" and "The Reprisall," where the speaker perceives himself to be in a direct competition with Christ rather than with himself. However, by even considering the possibility of giving to "grief" the "bodie" and the "heart" that are its "due," the speaker, whether consciously or unwittingly, attempts to usurp Christ's sacrifice. The pivotal moment of "The Thanksgiving" comes when Herbert's speaker realizes that he cannot be "victorious" (18) against Christ in a competition that pits one against the other in terms of love and grief experienced – that is, Christ's "passion" (29) against whatever human love and grief the speaker can feebly muster. This awareness continues into "The Reprisall," where Herbert's speaker acknowledges, albeit in frustration, that even should he die for Christ he is "behinde" (3) in any competition he envisions between them. "Joseph's

Coat" thus follows in the pattern set down by these two poems when the speaker declares that "[Christ] hath spoil'd the race," which He has done by putting an end to the race with His own death, and that "I live to shew his power, who once did bring / My *joyes* to *weep*, and now my *griefs* to *sing*." The speaker of "Joseph's Coat," merely by continuing to "live," demonstrates the power of Christ because, without Christ's sacrifice, the speaker is no longer required to die. By learning and accepting that this is a part of God's will and God's plan, the speaker – and the reader – can put the lesson taught by Joseph's suffering and his coat of many colours to work.

The poem "Aaron" has imagistic links to both "Marie Magdalene" and "Joseph's Coat," connections which are particularly apparent since "Aaron" immediately follows "Marie Magdalene" within *The Temple* while little more than a dozen poems lie between "Aaron" and "Joseph's Coat." "Aaron" presents the titular Old Testament priest and brother of Moses as both a type, like Joseph, to be later fulfilled in the New Testament by Christ and as a type which is also to be fulfilled by other individuals of the Christian faith:

Holinesse on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To leade them unto life and rest.
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profanenesse in my head,
Defects and darknesse in my breast,
A noise of passions ringing me for dead
Unto a place where is no rest.
Poore priest thus am I drest.

Onely another head
I have, another heart and breast
Another musick, making live not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest:
In him I am well drest.

Christ is my onely head,
My alone onely heart and breast,
My onely music, striking me ev'n dead;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest.

So holy in my head,
Perfect and light in my deare breast,
My doctrine tun'd by Christ, (who is not dead,
But lives in me while I do rest)
Come people; Aaron's drest.

In the first stanza, Herbert pays a great deal of attention to Aaron's priestly attire, because it is in Aaron's garments that the typology in this poem is rooted. As in "Marie Magdalene," there is an emphasis on displaying worthiness on the head. In the case of Mary, it was wearing Christ's "way" as a "jewell on her head," while Aaron wears "holinesse" in the form of a mitre, which has "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraved upon it (Exodus 28:36-38). Herbert rounds out his sketch of Aaron by describing the breastplate of "Light and perfections" that he wears upon his "breast", and which Exodus states that he will wear as a "breastplate of judgement" (28:15) so that he may "bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually" (28:30); and the "bells of gold" that Aaron wears "upon the hem" of his robe (28:33) so that his "sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not" (28:35). Aaron's physical dress is so distinctive as to make his presence and his godliness unmistakable even at the barest glance. His accoutrements are symbols of his inner holiness, of a sanctity of the heart and mind that has become physically manifest as a proclamation to all who might encounter him.

Aaron's garments provide a type to be fulfilled by both future priests and all Christians. As Bloch explains, referring us to verses from the bible where the Israelites

are described as being part of “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6) and “an holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5), in this poem “Aaron’s ceremonial vestments are figures of the spiritual qualities of the true Christian priest, and by extension, of any believer” (Bloch 135). The dilemma encountered by the speaker of the poem, not only as a priest but as a Christian is, as articulated later by Bloch: “how can the Old Testament ideal be bettered, let alone fulfilled, given man’s defects?” (137) Indeed, as we see in the second stanza of “Aaron,” Herbert’s speaker struggles with the fact that he does not find himself to possess the spiritual qualities that are required of a “true” priest and thus of a “true” Christian. The answer becomes clear, however, as the poem moves into its third and fourth stanzas, where the speaker comes to the realization that his seemingly impossible task can be achieved through Christ. By giving himself entirely over to Christ, Herbert’s speaker can replace the “Profaneness in [his] head” and the “Defects and darknesse in [his] breast” with the “holinesse,” “light and perfections” exhibited by Aaron’s garments. As Bloch puts it, “Herbert moves from original glory to sin and thence to redemption” (137), and, as she suggests, we can see Herbert’s speaker become a new man through the power of Christ’s sacrifice (137-138).

By relying upon Christ, then, Herbert’s speaker – and his readers – may become “true Aarons.” As Strier argues, in the end it Christ who is, in the strictest sense, “the true Aaron after all, since He ‘only and alone’ has all the required attributes and can perform the required function – ‘raising the dead / To lead them unto life and rest’” (*Love Known* 132-133). Insofar as he is more easily imitable (as opposed to Christ), however, it is Aaron who the speaker is attempting to become more like, and it is the figure of Aaron, in the end, who is able to bring the speaker and the reader closer to Christ. This can be seen in how the speaker not only attempts to don the spirituality and holiness represented by

Aaron's garments, but also steps into Aaron's name, which can be considered another type of clothing. Aaron's name, which exists as a personal name in the title of the poem, becomes a designation when he fastens the plural "s" onto the end of it in the first stanza and the possessive "'s" in the final stanza. Aaron's given name thus becomes a way to identify or categorize those who share similar attributes with him.[4] In the end, Aaron becomes subsumed by all Christians; both his garments and his name provide a way for members of the Christian community to recognize and to work towards the holiness required of them.

II.

Herbert certainly draws heavily on images of the body in presenting the biblical individuals here discussed as "copie[s]" of Christ and representations of the Christian community. From the Virgin Mary's womb and Mary Magdalene's posture, to Joseph's typical coat of many colours and Aaron's immediately visible piety, the body is so central to each of these poems that it is perhaps the most pervading form of imagery in the series. However, there is a second way in which Herbert "copie[s]" Christ within the lines of "Marie Magdalene" and "Joseph's Coat": in the process of describing the sins accumulated by Mary and the sorrows felt so keenly by Joseph, Herbert pointedly uses a vocabulary of numbers and counting.

As we saw in "Affliction (II)" in the introduction to this chapter, Herbert experiences great difficulty in attempting to do what is, after all, impossible: total the suffering that Christ has experienced in taking the punishment for "a world of sinne"

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[4] "Aaron" is not the only poem in which Herbert so treats a given name. In the poem "Self-Condemnation," he refers to anyone who loves "This worlds delights" (8) more than he or she loves God to be a "Judas-Jew" (18), with Judas becoming a designation or a modifier in a manner similar to Aaron.

("The Sacrifice" 205) upon his one, single body. Herbert is fully aware that he can never attach an exact figure to the vast number of deaths that his sins require and that Christ has undergone for him – and that, by implication, Christ has undergone for each individual member of the human race. The number of deaths represented by Christ's single death exceed even the number of hours that exist within 969 years, the age reached by Methuselah (Genesis 5:27). Likewise, the statement in "An Offering" that "one may be a nation" (11) – where "nation," rather than being an exact number, simply implies a vast number of citizens – illustrates the difficulty in counting or totalling the cost of Christ's suffering.[5] Herbert's preoccupation with counting is a major theme in a number of his other poems as well. In "Good Friday," for instance, Herbert further explores the problem of how to calculate Christ's enormous suffering:

> Shall I thy woes
> Number according to thy foes?
> Or, since one starre show'd thy first breath,
> Shall all thy death?
>
> Or shall each leaf,
> Which falls in Autumne, score a grief? (5-10)

Here, Herbert's speaker addresses the fact, as he does so often in *The Temple*, that Christ has suffered the "woes" of all humankind and that his death represents more than one, single death. As Wilcox points out, "The 'griefs' and 'woes' which went to make up Christ's death are, like the stars, beyond enumeration" (127). So also can we consider his "foes," which consist of every individual on earth, as their sins have led to the necessity of Christ's death. Conversely, then, each human *sin* can also be considered Christ's "foe," meaning that each individual human harbours within them an infinite number of

[5] Ironically, the punishment meted out to David is given because he defied God's order not to number the citizens of Israel (1 Chronicles 21).

Christ's enemies. Wilcox further writes, in her notes to the poem, that the word "score" can be taken to mean the following: "Count, keep the record of; used both in games and in noting a debt. Also, inscribe or engrave, as in writing or noting down a musical composition" (128). Given Herbert's oft-displayed fondness for wordplay, however, it is difficult to believe that he would ignore, in a poem filled with references to counting, that the word "score" also indicates the number twenty. Therefore, each "leaf / Which falls in Autumne" both represents a single grief borne by Christ, one for one, and a multitude of griefs, one for twenty, at the same time. If Christ's suffering is beyond counting in single increments, perhaps a closer approximation can be made by counting in multiples.

In referring to the number of human sins in "Marie Magdalene," Herbert employs an imagery of nature similar to that which he uses in "Good Friday." His speaker advises the reader that "Though we could dive / In tears like seas, our sinnes are pil'd / Deeper then they, in words, and works, and thoughts" (10-12). Just as Christ's "woes" in "Good Friday" number more than the stars in the sky and the drifting leaves in autumn, the sins of each human are more than the drops of water contained within the sea. Just as Herbert's hyperbolic method of counting in "Good Friday," "Affliction (II)" and "An Offering" underscores Christ's power and love, so too does his counting in "Marie Magdalene." Even though the subject of Herbert's counting in this poem is Mary and the human race, in the end it is Christ who, as we are reminded in the very next lines, "did vouchsafe and deigne / To bear her filth" (13-14); that is, it is Christ who has met her uncountable sins and accounted for each and every single one of them.

The counting imagery in "Joseph's Coat" is somewhat different than it is in "Marie Magdalene" in that Herbert is not as explicit about the infinite capacity of Joseph's suffering as he is about Mary's sins. There are no stars, no leaves, no tears

against which Joseph's sorrow is measured, only a consciousness that "Sorrow hath chang'd its *note*: such is his will, / Who changeth all things, as him pleaseth best" (3-4, emphasis added). While the word "note" is certainly meant to evoke images of musical notes and to echo the first line of the poem, in which the narrator "sing[s]" and "indite[s]," it also suggests currency. The Oxford English Dictionary provides two definitions that are of significance to this line: first, that a note can mean "a written promise to pay a certain sum at a specified time," and second, "A promissory note used as currency; *spec*. a banknote. Freq. with value specified." For Joseph's sorrow to have "chang'd its note," then, is for his sorrow to have changed its price. The vagueness of this "note," with its exact value never specified by Herbert's speaker and its shifting nature, makes it as uncountable as the human sins in "Marie Magdalene."

In both "Marie Magdalene" and "Joseph's Coat," just as in "Good Friday," "Affliction (II)" and "An Offering," the purpose of these references to numbers and counting is to highlight the differences that exist between Christ and humankind. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Herbert is painfully aware in his poetry that it is impossible for any human to be fully like Christ – only Christ/God is capable of serving the required penance for Mary's uncountable sins and of altering the degree of affliction suffered by the speaker of "Joseph's Coat." However, it is just this discrepancy between Christ and the individuals titled within the poems examined, both in this section and the previous section, that make the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Joseph and Aaron the perfect subjects for Herbert's experiment in human imitations of Christ's anagrammatic nature. In the end, they *are* human, and this makes them more relatable than Christ's godly incomprehensibility. If Herbert's speaker and his Christian community wish to successfully imitate anyone, then the humility displayed by Mary Magdalene, the

submission to God’s will shown by Joseph and the holiness exhibited by Aaron are much more attainable. By recognizing themselves within these biblical individuals and modelling their behaviour based on the examples provided by these individuals, members of the Christian community can grow closer to God.

Chapter 3

"From Loving Man": Human Value and the Abandonment of God

Yet do we still persist as we began,
And so should perish, but that nothing can,
Though it be cold, hard, foul, from loving man
Withhold thee.
--"Sepulchre," lines 21-24

The speaker of Herbert's "Sepulchre," standing desolately outside the tomb of Christ, is confronted by one of the greatest realities of Christianity: humanity's inability to ever rival or reciprocate God's unconditional love for the degenerate human race. The knowledge that his love can never be fully commensurate with the perfect love exhibited by God is present throughout the entire poem, both in the ubiquitous body of the lifeless Christ, reminding reader and speaker alike of His ultimate sacrifice, and the speaker's allegations that none of the "many hearts on earth" (3) can properly "Receive" (4) the Lord within their depths. The awareness of this incommensurability is most neatly contained, however, within the double layer of meaning that Herbert folds into the phrase "loving man" in the penultimate line of the final verse. The word "loving" can be understood in two different ways, depending on whether it is taken as an adjective or a gerund. As an adjective attached to the word "man," it suggests something that both speaker and reader already know to be false. Read in this way, it is man who appears to take the greater initiative in the relationship between human and God and thus it is man who brings God and human together. Battling through all that is "cold, hard, [and] foul," he or she who is "loving" reaches God's side in defiance of death and everlasting torment.

One of the many points where this reading of the stanza begins to break down is when the reader remembers Herbert's fixation throughout *The Temple* on humankind's

inability to be constant. Herbert's speaker swings wildly between praise and recrimination of God, and while his moments of frustration and wilfulness are often accompanied by an underlying presence of love and a desire to be faithful, he is still, first and foremost, human. In the end we must allow that this reading is unsustainable for the simple reason that, as Richard Strier points out, "If 'loving' were an adjective modifying 'man,' man should *not* perish, and 'Sepulchre' as a whole would truly be a hopelessly incoherent piece" (*Love Known* 17, original emphasis). In line with Strier's assertion, the opening of this verse, with the acknowledgement that "we still persist as we began," serves as a reminder that despite knowledge of their sinful, unloving ways, humans continue to commit sin after sin, holding to the pattern laid out by Adam and Eve. If man were truly "loving" enough to be capable of uniting with God on his own, then Christ's death, and thus God's ultimate act of love, would be superfluous. The providential act of "loving," then, must necessarily be God's, and nothing exists that could restrain Him from "loving" humankind. As Strier explains, through the impossibility of the first reading – which is not only "grammatically respectable" but also "inevitable" – "Sepulchre" impeccably "assert[s] the distinctions" that exist between God and the human race (17).

The incommensurability that exists between the love of God and that of humans poses a critical question considered by Herbert's speaker in "Obedience": "Lord, what is man to thee, / That thou shouldst minde a rotten tree?" (21-22). The imagery prompted by these lines is remarkably accurate. Humans are intrinsically incapable of bearing the fruit that God's care and attention deserve to harvest: that is, unwavering love and devotion. The question is addressed again in the poem "Dialogue" when God berates the speaker for believing himself to be unworthy of God's love by declaring that "*What the*

gains in having thee / Do amount to, onely he, / Who for man was sold, can see" (13-15, original emphasis). According to "Dialogue," no human is qualified to posit an answer to this question. However, while the "why" of God's love and the benefits He receives from human love are something of a mystery to Herbert's speaker, two things are certain when we look at the interaction between God and humans in *The Temple*. Despite humanity's apparently lacklustre abilities, God not only loves humankind, He values them as highly as the angels in His perfect heavenly choir and feels genuine bereavement when they are spiritually and emotionally distant from Him. In the first section of this chapter, I will look at the poems "Dulnesse," "Antiphon (II)" and "Praise (III)," in which Herbert's human speaker comes to the realization that humans possess worth in the eyes of God equal to that of His other creations. In the second section I will then examine the emotional anguish that Christ experiences when He is abandoned by all of humanity as He is led to His death in "The Sacrifice."

I.

Although Herbert's speaker expresses a desire in "Praise (III)" to convert others to the worship of God so that God might receive more human praise than just his own, he is always intensely aware of the (self-professed) unworthiness of that praise. In several places, this awareness is articulated as a comparison between men and angels, the latter of whom possess far fewer flaws than humankind. In "Miserie," Herbert's speaker decides unilaterally that God should "let the Angels praise [His] name" (1) in place of humans, adding further that "Man cannot serve [God]; let him go, / And serve the swine" (43-44). In "Dulnesse," Herbert again addresses the divide between angels and men, with angels once more coming out the victor. In the concluding lines of the poem, Herbert's speaker

declares that he will only allow himself to look towards God – "*Look* onely; for to *love* thee, who can be, / What angel fit?" (27-28, original emphasis). The poem as a whole, as Rosemary Freeman describes, is a parody of "secular love lyrics" (313) in which Herbert's speaker, having addressed Christ throughout the poem in tropes well-suited to the "worldly lover," comes to the conclusion that "the love embedded in the 'kind' [of poetry] he has adopted can never be fit for the purpose [of loving God]" (314). In a similar vein, Helen Wilcox writes, regarding these last two lines of "Dulnesse," that "In contrast to earthly love, to love God fitly is beyond the capacity even of angels" (413). As Wilcox and Freeman suggest, both the earthly love that the speaker is capable of and his mode of expressing that love fall far short of the glory that God deserves. If angels – those heavenly creatures who are both physically and morally leagues above humankind – are not "fit" to love God, then human love must certainly be of a low degree indeed.

Both of these unfavourable comparisons of humans to angels come in moments where Herbert's speaker is frustrated with his own limitations. In "Miserie," which Strier refers to as "one of the darkest poems in *The Temple*" (4), the speaker is confronted by the "foolishnesse" ("Miserie" 7) and utter sinfulness of humankind; in "Dulnesse," as we have just seen, he realizes that the only love he is capable of is unworthy of God. In "Dulnesse," however, he is much closer than he is in "Miserie" to comprehending and acknowledging that God does not make distinctions in His love and acceptance of praise from His various creations. While the implication that angels are more capable of properly loving God still stands, in "Dulnesse" it is balanced by the fact that angels, like humans, are less perfect than God and therefore not fully equipped to praise and love God to the full extent that He deserves.

This awareness, still only half-realized in "Dulnesse," is further developed in the poems "Antiphon (II)" and "Praise (III)." In "Antiphon (II)," we see how humans and angels, while characterized by various differences in the beginning of the poem, are actually equal in the estimation of God:

Chor. Praised be the God of love,
Men. Here below,
Angels. And here above:
Cho. Who hath dealt his mercies so,
Ang. To his friend,
Men. And to his foe;

Cho. That both grace and glorie tend
Ang. Us of old,
Men. And us in th'end.
Cho. The great shepherd of the fold
Ang. Us did make,
Men. For us was sold.

Cho. He our foes in pieces brake;
Ang. Him we touch;
Men. And him we take.
Cho. Wherefore since that he is such,
Ang. We adore,
Men. And we do crouch.

Cho. Lord, thy praises should be more.
Men. We have none,
Ang. And we no store.
Cho. Praised be the God alone,
Who hath made of two folds one.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the definition of "antiphon" to be "A versicle or sentence sung by one choir in response to another," suggesting, as we see in the poem, two separate choirs who sing lines to one another that are related but still distinct. Although the men and angels always begin by singing in a united chorus, they continually separate into two choirs singing different words. On the surface, these distinctions serve to present the angels in a much better light than the men; for instance, the angels exist

"above" in heaven while men dwell "below" on the earth, suggesting a clear hierarchy of morality and power which is enhanced by the angels' creation in a time "of old" before the existence of humankind.

Upon closer examination, however, both the structure and content of "Antiphon (II)" actually serve to lessen rather than to enhance the perceived distance between angels and men. In *The Poetry of George Herbert*, Helen Vendler discusses the unusual construction of the poem, calling it "the most peculiar example of terza rima in English" (209). This is because, as Vendler further points out, "Antiphon (II)" can truly be considered to be "written in tetrameter couplets," with each second and third line representing a single line that has been broken into two (210) and which Herbert has structured so as to ensure that the broken lines spoken by men and angels are of equivalent length to one another and, combined, are of an equivalent length to the united choruses (211). Indeed, with this in mind we can see that Herbert has taken special care in ensuring that the syllables spoken separately by angels and men are exactly equivalent to those uttered in their combined choruses. In line 9, he attaches a truncated "the" to the "end" that follows it in order to guarantee symmetry between the two separate choirs. Additionally, each set of lines spoken by angels and men is joined by the conjunction "and"; thus, while each set does contain an uneven seven syllables, neither angels nor men are ever given the advantage of that extra syllable. Herbert even goes so far as to pare the word "*Angels*" to the abbreviated "*Ang.*" immediately after its first use has established exactly what he is referring to, granting the angels the same three letters that are granted to men.

As the poem progresses towards its end, we begin to see that, just as there are similarities between the ways in which the lines of angels and men are formally

structured, there are also similarities in the sentiments that these lines contain. Although, as mentioned above, the united chorus of angels and men always separates into two distinct choruses, it must also be noted that they always immediately become united once again. These combined choruses highlight the general likeness that angels and men have one to the other as creatures of God: both praise God, both are dealt with mercifully, both are tended by "grace and glorie" etc. The chorus is only broken in each instance because the angels and the men choose to interpret the sentiments in these choruses differently. Both praise God, but the angels do so while in heaven and the men while on earth; both are dealt with mercifully, but the angels count themselves among His "friend[s]" while the men consider themselves to be His "foe[s]" etc. To return briefly to our earlier discussion on the last two lines of "Dulnesse," these distinctions allow us to make a pun on the words "who can be / What *angel* fit?" (27-28, emphasis added) because both angels and men are viewing God from different *angles,* both physically and spiritually. And just as we found in "Dulnesse," "Antiphon (II)" shows us that these different angles are not so far from one another after all. About midway through the poem, the differences in interpretation begin to dwindle and it is no longer only the combined choruses that show the similarities between these two groups. In *Spelling the Word*, Chana Bloch argues that the moment this begins to unfold is the moment in which "Christ's work of redemption is announced [...]. From this moment the opposed voices begin to draw together, and the short lines are in synonymous parallelism: *touch/take; adore/crouch; more/no store*" (248, original emphasis). To build on Bloch's identification of this parallelism, the angels claim to "touch" God while the men "take," but the taking prompts images of physically taking from Him, and thus also implies touching; the angels "adore" God while the men "crouch" before Him, but crouching

implies kneeling and the overwhelming awe that goes hand in hand with praise of God; and although God deserves more praises than He is already receiving, men have “none” left to give Him and angels “no store” remaining – both have already given what they are capable of.

The two final lines of “Antiphon (II)” successfully bring the choruses of angels and men together for good. This is the only time in the poem where there are two lines spoken by the greater chorus, and it is also the only point in the poem where this chorus does not split off again into the separate choirs of angels and men. Bloch suggests that this is because “there is [now] so little difference between what the men and angels are saying that there is no longer any reason for them to speak by turns” (248). This is indeed what appears to have happened; both the angels and the men have come to the realization that in God’s eyes they are, essentially, one. God has made one single “fold” out of the two different choirs, and the purpose of this choir is what is stated in the very first line of the poem, before the angels and the men start listing their differences: to offer praise and love to the creator of all things, which are accepted equally from both. The word “fold” implies not only the image of Christ as a shepherd herding His (united) flock of followers into its sheepfold, but also suggests the folds of a book. Ultimately, the angels and the men have become like two pages in a manuscript of praise, both engraved with different features and yet both equally significant to the whole of God’s praise.

Herbert returns to this theme of man equalling the angels in God’s estimation in the poem “Praise (III).” In the fourth verse of this poem, Herbert’s speaker contemplates, in wonder and perplexity, how a being as great and mighty as God could ever love humankind, let alone take the time to address the often petty wants and needs of His wayward creation:

> Thousands of things do thee employ
> In ruling all
> This spacious globe: Angels must have their joy,
> Devils their rod, the sea his shore,
> The windes their stint: and yet when I did call,
> Thou heardst my call, and more. (19-24)

In this verse, Herbert illustrates an exceedingly busy God whose duties to "all / This spacious globe" not only do not restrain Him from hearing the calls of humankind for aid and attention, but also do not distract Him from giving humankind even "more." This use of the word "more" encapsulates a number of things. It indicates that God has not only listened to the speaker's call, but has also provided an answer; it indicates that God has heard not only the call that the speaker has verbalized, but all of the calls kept muted within the speaker's heart; and it implies that God has heard (and answered) not only the speaker's call, but similar calls from every being on earth. There is a level of irony in the fact that so many poems in *The Temple* accuse God, in moments of frustration and despair, of ignoring the speaker or withdrawing from him when, as becomes apparent in "Praise (III)," God gives humans every bit of attention that He has given to all the world put together. He gives humans their however seemingly infrequent bouts of joy ("All creatures have their joy: and man hath his" ("Man's Medley" 3)); He gives humans discipline when their actions require it ("Thou art both *Judge* and *Saviour*, *feast* and *rod*" ("Sighs and Grones" 27, original emphasis); He provides a check to guide man's explosive passions, as the shore breaks the waves of the sea and guides its expansiveness ("But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde, / At every word, / Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Childe*" ("The Collar" 33-35, original emphasis)); and He provides limits and boundaries, as He does to keep the wind from running roughshod over all the world ("O blessed streams [of Christ's blood]! either ye do prevent / And stop our sinnes from

growing thick and wide, / Or else give tears to drown them, as they grow" ("H. Baptisme (1)" 7-9)). The care and attention provided by God for humanity is intricate and oftentimes unintelligible, but it is always there.

One accusation that can potentially be levelled at the God represented within "Praise (III)" is that He gives "more" to humankind than He does to anything else, including the angels, thus prompting a reversal of the hierarchy that Herbert so effectively dismantles in "Antiphon (II)." Herbert's speaker, however, is very careful not to cross this line. With a single word, he manages to keep everything in their rightful proportions: the angels "*must* have their joy," the devils *must* suffer "their rod," and the sea and the winds respectively *must* be given their "shore" and their "stint." All of these *must* take place because God is fair and just and gives to each and every one of His creations exactly what they require. The angels, who exist in a much more perfect state than humans, do not require the "rod" that humans do, while the devils necessarily must not receive "joy" at God's hands etc. Humans, as exceedingly flawed as they are, simply require a diversity of responses unnecessary for the others. While every human "call" that is made becomes yet another thing that Herbert's beleaguered God must address, becomes another gift impossible to reciprocate, in His infinite love and mercy for humankind He never fails to mete out the appropriate answer.

II.

If, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter, Herbert's representation of God places so great a value on the love, praise and care of humankind, then it stands to reason that the absence of human love and praise poses a huge loss for God. In this second section, I would like to further observe God's incomparable love of humankind

from this perspective. Beyond feeling an immense love for humankind to the extent that He values them alongside the angels, I will examine, through a brief reading of Herbert's "The Sacrifice," how Christ is presented by Herbert as bereft when He is separated from humankind. This bereft Christ portrayed in "The Sacrifice" is not a deviation in *The Temple*; in poems such as "The Pulley," which uses a general third-person speaker but presents the reader with a significant number of lines spoken by Herbert's representation of God, we can see that God considers it to be a personal loss to Himself when he is denied the (however imperfect) love offered by humankind. In "The Pulley," Herbert's speaker describes the "blessings" (2) that God has given to him: "strength" (6), "beautie [...], wisdome, honour, [and] pleasure" (7). In the end, however, God decides to withhold the gift of "Rest" (10), for if He were to give such a blessing to man, then man "would adore my gifts in stead of me, / And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature: / So both should losers be" (13-15). It is natural, of course, to consider humans to have lost something should they not be "tosse[d]" to God's merciful and loving "breast" (20). God, however, is considered no less the loser here than humankind, for Herbert makes no distinction in the degree of loss experienced by either party.

"The Sacrifice" provides what is perhaps the most intriguing glimpse into Herbert's understanding of the relationship and interaction between God and human. "The Sacrifice" stands as the longest poem within the main portion of *The Temple* and is written as a dramatic monologue spoken by Christ as He approaches His crucifixion. Written in stanzas of four lines each which describe the abundant physical and emotional abuses that Christ has endured on the long road to Calvary, each concludes with the exact same line: "Was ever grief like mine?" There are only two exceptions to this pattern in the entire poem, where, rather than turning the measure of Christ's grief into a humanly

incomprehensible query, the last line of the stanza simply states unequivocally: "Never was grief like mine" (216, 252). The reader is confronted with such descriptions, painted by Christ's own tortured voice, of how He is bound and taken away to be condemned ("they lay hold on me, not with the hands / Of faith, but furie" (45-46)); how He is subjected to physical torments ("Ah! how they scourge me!" (125), "They buffet me, and box me as they list" (129)); and how, in the end, He hangs upon the cross to die for humankind ("Lo, here I hang, charg'd with a world of sinne" (205)).

While "The Sacrifice" devotes a great deal of time to tallying the physical torments suffered by Christ, it is the emotional isolation that He feels from those He is dying to redeem that appears to afflict Him the most. He mourns the fact that His people have consciously chosen to rebel against Him ("The princes of my people make a head / Against their Maker"(5-6)); He grieves over the betrayal of Judas ("Mine own Apostle, who the bag did beare, / Though he had all I had, did not forbear / To sell me also" (13-15)); He laments the inconstancy of his (non) remaining Apostles ("All my Disciples fly; fear puts a barre / Betwixt my friends and me" (49-50)); He is disappointed by the lies spoken in order to falsely condemn Him ("The Priest and rulers all false witnesse seek / 'Gainst him, who seeks not life, but is the meek / And readie Paschal Lambe of this great week" (57-59)); and He sorrows that God's own chosen people stand against Him ("The *Jews* accuse me with despitefulnesse; / And vying malice with my gentlenesse, / Pick quarrels with their onely happinesse" (85-87, original emphasis). For all that Christ is physically surrounded by humans, He is completely alone and utterly without comfort.

Amongst all of this emotional anguish and isolation, there is only one reference within "The Sacrifice" to love or remorse being shown by the humans physically present at Christ's death. A little over midway through the poem, Christ declares:

> Weep not, deare friends, since I for both have wept
> When all my tears were bloud, the while you slept:
> Your tears for your own fortunes should be kept:
> Was ever grief like mine? (149-152)

This verse is a reference to the events that take place in Luke 23, where Christ speaks to the Daughters of Jerusalem who follow as He is led to His death and weep for his wrongful condemnation:

> 27. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.
> 28. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.
> 29. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. (Luke 23:27-29)

Herbert's account of Christ's speech to the Daughters of Jerusalem is, for the most part, a replica of these verses from Luke. In both places, Christ exhibits a selfless concern for His people even though the death that He is about to experience is worse than anything they will ever suffer. Aside from the fact that he does not name the Daughters of Jerusalem, but instead refers to them more generally as "deare friends," there is one major change that Herbert makes: his addition in the second line is the most interesting aspect of this stanza. In the very middle of the only display of human grief within the entire poem, Herbert's Christ-speaker interjects a reminder of how humanity has abandoned Him by referring to the tears of blood that He wept, devoid of human companionship, in the Garden of Gethsemane while His disciples and all of Israel slept. This combined image of sleep and tears recalls an earlier stanza in which Christ declares: "Yet my Disciples sleep: I cannot gain / One houre of watching; but their drowsie brain / Comforts not me, and doth my doctrine stain" (29-31).

Herbert's deliberate choice to focus on Christ's emotional isolation rather than letting His "deare friends" offer true comfort becomes more striking when read alongside other works from the seventeenth century that detail the death of Christ, such as Aemilia Lanyer's long poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Like "The Sacrifice," Lanyer's poem, published in 1611 and containing over 1800 lines, addresses the torments and death suffered by Christ for the sake of humanity. Also like Herbert, Lanyer both includes lines on, and chooses to make alterations to, the story outlined in Luke:

> Most blessed daughters of Jerusalem,
> Who found such favour in your Saviours sight,
> To turne his face when you did pitie him;
> Your tearefull eyes, beheld his eies more bright;
> Your Faith and Love unto such grace did clime,
> To have reflection from this Heav'nly Light:
> Your Eagles eyes did gaze against this Sunne,
> Your hearts did thinke, he dead, the world were done.
>
> When spightfull men with torments did oppresse
> Th'afflicted body of this innocent Dove,
> Poore women seeing how much they did transgresse,
> By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat, may prove,
> What may be done among the thickest presse,
> They labor still these tyrants hearts to move;
> In pitie and compassion to forbeare
> Their whipping, spurning, tearing of his haire. (985-1000)

Lanyer's description of the grief and tears wept for Christ is far more elaborate than Herbert's, though this could simply be accounted a matter of length; *Salve Deus,* after all, is seven times as long as "The Sacrifice." Additionally, however, the grief that the women display, their "teares" and "sighes" and "cries," is a much more compelling image of grief than Herbert's simple "weep not," which leaves the image of the weepers largely up to the reader's imagination. The two most significant distinctions between Herbert and Lanyer's portrayals of this scene are first, although Lanyer has her Christ "turne" to the Daughters of Jerusalem, just as He does in Luke, He never admonishes them in any

way, and second, He appears to take comfort from their presence. Although Christ's "eies [are] more bright," holding more tears than a human could be capable of, the women's tears are nonetheless a "reflection" of His. At the same time as Christ is attempting to comfort those who mourn for Him, they are also attempting to comfort Him. Of course, Lanyer has the ulterior motive of firmly establishing women as sympathizers of Christ, as also exhibited in other portions of her poem such as her expositions on the Virgin Mary's tears at the foot of Christ's cross and the speech given by Pilate's wife in an attempt to have Christ exonerated. Her extended focus on the acts of grief performed by the Daughters of Jerusalem, the "favour" that they find in their "Saviours sight" for their anguish, and her omission of Christ's admonition are an attempt to help exonerate women of Eve's sin by contrasting the women in this scene with the "spightfull men" who put Him to death.

But Herbert appears to have an ulterior motive as well, one which involves consciously stripping Christ of any comfort that can be derived from the tears that have finally, after more than a hundred lines of distress and emotional isolation, been offered to Him. In order to continue building the monumental tally of "grief" that his Christ-speaker experiences to its crescendo in the final lines of the poem, Herbert cannot allow the reader to see any lessening in the amount of "grief" that has heretofore accumulated. Furthermore, Herbert cannot allow the reader to see humanity, which has largely abandoned Christ to His fate, in a sympathetic manner, something the reminder of Christ's isolation forestalls. To do otherwise would lessen the impact of Christ's unconditional and unparalleled love for humankind and His decision to die for those who have consciously and wilfully rebelled against Him.

We return, then, to the insights revealed in “Sepulchre.” In a very similar manner to “Sepulchre,” what “The Sacrifice” does is highlight the incommensurability that exists between God and humankind. Humans are incapable of perfect love while God is capable of nothing but, and this is reasserted in virtually every stanza of the poem. Despite this disparity however, God’s love in “The Sacrifice” and the other poems examined in this chapter is always visible and the value of humanity is clear. In “Antiphon (II)” we see an identification of the worth of humankind that is largely technical in nature. In “Praise (III)” we see a careful portioning out of God’s reactions based on need, for neither men nor angels are loved above the other. On the one hand, “The Sacrifice” also takes a methodical approach by recording the many torments suffered by Christ, and thus meticulously calculates the exact cost – and thus the value – of humankind. On the other hand, however, “The Sacrifice” provides a much more intimate glimpse into the mind of Herbert’s Christ as we are confronted with the broken dirge of a God whose beloved creation does not care what He is about to sacrifice on their behalf. Having made the ultimate declaration of love for humankind, it is no wonder that He should feel incomparable heartache when His return is nothing but turned backs.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to illustrate the prominent role that community, variously defined, occupies within Herbert's poetry. In a variety of Herbert's verses, we have seen portrayed the guiding role of the congregational community, the relationship between biblical individuals and the Christian and human communities that follow, and the intricate relationship between God and the human community. While I have discussed in depth a small selection of the topics relating to the capacious theme of community in *The Temple*, there are naturally a number of avenues for further study suggested within its pages that, given the restrictions on the length of MA theses, I have not been able to examine.

I would like to briefly address three of these topics here in closing. First, my focus in the second chapter on the bodies of Christ and others suggests for discussion the place of the Eucharist in Christian communities, which of course leads us back to the seventeenth-century debates about the place of ceremony in Christianity referred to in the introduction. Second, throughout this thesis I focus in many places on Herbert's strategies of writing. In the second chapter, we can see Herbert's focus on the act of writing, while in the third chapter we see his careful attention to voice and song in "Antiphon (II)" and the "call[s]" (24) of humankind in "Praise (III)." Additionally, in poems such as "Sinne (I)" (chapter 1) and "Antiphon (II)" (chapter 3), we see Herbert's scrupulous attention to poetic form. All of these play into the wider interest that Herbert shows, throughout *The Temple*, in the mechanics of poetry.

The third topic, to which I will give slightly more attention, is another which is latent in all three chapters. Many of the poems studied within this thesis lend themselves to a discussion of gender. In the first chapter, the poem "Constancie" ("Who, when he is

to treat / With sick folks, women, those whom passions sway, / Allows for that, and keeps his constant way" (26-28)) suggests a weakness that naturally exists within women and that, furthermore, can have an effect on others (ie, men). Of the four poems predominantly studied in the second chapter, we can see differences between the ones titled after male biblical individuals and those titled after females. Herbert's references to Joseph and Aaron are largely metonymical in nature, with each being recognized more by their clothing than by their actual bodies or selves, the latter of which is the case with the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. Furthermore, Joseph and Aaron both present types of Christ in and of themselves, having existed in a time before Christ ever walked the earth. While their holiness is certainly outshone by Christ and is only entirely fulfilled after Christ's birth, in the context of the Old Testament the godliness of both Joseph and Aaron is able to stand independently of Christ. Meanwhile, the two females Herbert has chosen to represent are both inextricably linked to Christ, one having borne Him and the other being numbered among His disciples; any holiness they might possess is thus tied to a physical closeness to Christ. Finally, in the third chapter we see Herbert, in a departure from Luke, neglect to directly name the Daughters of Jerusalem and elect to use instead the gender neutral "deare friends" ("The Sacrifice" 149). In each chapter, then, we see indications that gender influences Herbert's treatment of community.

Like the topics that I have discussed at greater length in my three chapters, all three of these matters pose significant contributions to the thesis of this project which is, at its heart, how various communities and individuals relate both to one another and to God. Rituals such as the Eucharist provide the church with ways to approach God; Herbert's poetic techniques represent his own attempts to become closer to God; and gender necessarily affects the place and perception of women in seventeenth-century

Christianity. The topic of community manifests itself in seemingly endless ways within Herbert's work. This thesis has provided a brief survey of a selection of these, but as we can see, it is a rich field of study with many further possibilities for exploration.

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