

HERBERT'S "CHURCH MILITANT"

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Herbert's manuscripts of *The Temple* in the Bodleian Library and in Dr. William's Library both present the "Church Militant" separated from the section called "The Church". Although the poems in *The Temple* are not disposed in a chronological order, their sequence is determined by the poet's various states of mind in his relationship with God and himself. "These intimate poems exactly correspond to the description which he gave of them in his last message to Ferrar, that he would find there "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom" ¹. Herbert's inner struggle to really communicate with the Lord by accepting His love and by trusting Him are the solid columns on which he builds the structure of his temple. The reader is led from "The Church Porch" to "The Church" itself where the poet has his personal dialogue with God or talks to himself about God. The Church — its aisles, its music — provides a roof for his inner conflicts and there most of the time he quiets his restless soul in God's love. "The Church Militant", on the contrary, approaches the church as God's institution on earth and portrays its fight with Sin. In his notes on "The Church Militant" (p. 544), Hutchinson points out that the word "religion" appears nine times in this poem and that it cannot be found anywhere else in *The Temple*. In fact, Herbert makes an attempt to describe the development of the Lord's worshipping on earth and its persecution by Sin — an injury not made against man himself or society but against God. "Sin is a term which belongs to "religion" (2). It is portrayed as Christ's enemy, as an Antichrist. "As new and old *Rome* did one Empire twist;

(1) George Herbert, *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1964), p. XXXVII. All the quotations of Herbert's poems are taken from this edition.

(2) *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, ed. James Hastings, vol II (New York, 1922).

so both together are one Antichrist" (11. 205-6). The two sinful cities are "satans double crest" (1. 219). There is not a personal conflict involved in the poem but an antagonism between two human institutions which are related to God. It was probably Herbert's constant concern for the conflicting aspect of life that made him choose to talk about the Church Militant — engaged in warfare, fighting, aggressive action — rather than about the Church Expectant or Triumphant. The church on earth interests him much more than the church in purgatory or heaven. Herbert is interested in the relationship between God and man on earth.

The 297-line poem is based upon a symmetric pattern: the Church comes from the East and takes a Westward course (Egypt, Greece, Rome, Germany, Spain, England, America) as does the sun (11. 10-100); she is followed by Sin which tracks the same direction immediately (1. 101) as the night follows the day. The cycle is complete — by going West they will reach East, the beginning of the circle, and there they will wait together for Judgement. The circle describes what happened in the past and foretells what is going to happen in the future — religion will go to America and Sin will follow her as it did before. The same elements which caused religion to grow — power and art — degenerate and foster the development of Sin. The continuity of the circle is assured by the ambiguity that characterizes human nature — capable of great and mean deeds.

They have their period also and set times
Both for their vertuous actions and their crimes.

Virtue is to crime as the sun is to darkness — they enhance each other by means of opposition. The sun guides "our understanding as our sight" (11. 17-18) and illuminates the way ahead and behind—"though forward be his flight/Listens behinde him and allows some light,/ Till all depart" (11. 31-32). The idea of light, is thus, allied to thought ("understanding") and perception ("sight"). Darkness stands for the denial of these qualities. This race seems to be useless for it leads both Church and Sin back to the East—the place they started from — and so they are in the same condition, waiting for judgement.

That when they have accomplished round,
And met in th'east their first and ancient sound,
Judgement may meet both and search them round. (11.
267-9).

But being persecuted by Sin does not prevent the Church from continuing her eastward course by going West. What is important is to keep going on as the sun does. "Because it drew more neare to time and space, where judgments shall appeare" (11. 276-7). Church and Sin are not only described in a horizontal level that is chronologically in the past, present and future — but also in a vertical level — their constant liaison with the Creator. God Himself established the Church (11. 11-12) and kept contact with it through the leaders of His people — Abraham, Moses, Solomon (11. 18-20); the Son Himself came to earth, eliminated the partition walls (1. 26) and extended Christianity to the Gentiles. The further propagation was made by the Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit and by the monks, who in the desert, tried to keep contact with God³. The scheme of the course of religion on earth — going from East to West in a circle — and its being always connected with God is meant to illustrate "the successive unfolding of a plan of infinite wisdom, justice and mercy, looking to His glory and to the eternal happiness of mankind. On the part of man, history is the biography of the race, and the gradual development, both normal and abnormal, of all its physical, intellectual and moral forces to the final consummation at the general judgement, with its eternal rewards and punishments"⁴.

Although the conflict develops throughout the poem by means of a logical pattern, it does not find solution in Logic. As it happens in all the lyrics in "The Church", the only answer for the antagonism between Church and Sin lies in God's mercy. After the poem presents all the historical events that support the development of Church and Sin, after it draws their tracks symmetrically in time and space, it ends in a prayer — "L'Envoy" — in which the speaker asks the Lord to cease the war so that His sheep may rest in Him and love Him". "Thee to Love, in thee to sleep" (1. 4) is the characteristic attitude which follows the conflicts in Herbert's lyrics. The poet *trusts* God's power and love and leaves the solution of the problems up to Him.

(3) St. Paul represents the Church Militant, marching and conquering Christianity. The course he took is described by Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church A. D. 1-100* (New York, 1822). "He followed the current of history, commerce, and civilization, from Syria to Asia Minor, Greece, Italy and perhaps as far as Spain" (p. 319). Monasticism also followed an East-West course. It began in Egypt with "holy Marcarius" and "great Anthonie" (1.41) and spread to Persia, Babylonia, Arabia, Greece, Italy and Spain (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 15).

(4) Philip Schaff, p. 2.

Let not Sinne devoure thy fold,
Bragging that thy blood is cold,
That thy flesh hath lost his food,
And thy Crosse is common wood.
(11. 5-10)

God is called to defend His fold and the fight is, thus, placed in personal terms between the Lord and Sin. God is asked to show Sin His power — His live blood and His holy cross — so that Sin cannot boast of his own conquests. A real vengeance is required:

Choke him, let him say no more,
But reserve his breath in store,
Tell thy conquest and his fall
Make his sighs to use it all,
And then bargain with the winde
To discharge what is behinde.
(11. 11-16)

The speaker trusts God and His power to defeat *His* enemy. The poet makes it God's battle. He wants God to save His sheep not because of the sheep themselves but because they are *His*. God has to show His power. The speaker is part of the Lord's fold and this is the reason why he feels at ease to speak with Him in a prayer. There is an intimate tone in "L'Envoy" which is not present in "The Church Militant". There is a difference in the way he invokes God in both poems. In the latter he addresses himself to the "Almightie Lord" who is sitting on His glorious throne and acknowledges His power in a very rational way. The verb "to know" predominates in these lines and the succeeding colons (1, 2, 4) establish a logical sequence in the thoughts.

Almightie Lord, who from thy glorious throne
Seest and rulest all things ev'n as one:
The smallest ant or atome knows thy power,
Known also to each minute of an hour:
Much more do Commonweals acknowledge thee,
And wrap their policies in thy decree,
Complying with thy counsels, doing nought
Which doth not meet with an eternal thought.
(11. 1-8)

God's power is *stated* in terms of "time" ("each minute of an hour") and "matter" ("ant or atome"). It goes from the particular to the general "Commonweals" and everything is centralized under the unity ("Seest and rulest all things ev'en as one") of God's "counsels", "decrees", and "thought". Thought is indeed, the main basis for the structure of the speech. The speaker starts describing the settlement and progress of the Church on earth and its being tracked by Sin. Although the

presentation of this struggle is dramatic — both Church and Sin are set on the stage as travelers going after one another in a circular way — the tone of the iambic pentameter lines is descriptive and each step of the pilgrimage is concretely supported by historical events. In “L’Envoy” the tone is completely different — the speaker calls God, takes His power and mercy for granted, and asks for His protection (11. 2-5). The end-stopped lines are short (seven syllables). The rhythm is quick and emotional as if the speaker were in a hurry to deliver his message. There is no vestige of the explanatory tone which characterizes “The Church Militant”. However, the transition of tone between the two poems is not abrupt. In “The Church Militant” the lines “How deare to me, O God, thy counsels are! / Who may with thee compare?” appear five times (11. 47-48, 99-100, 155-6, 208-209, 278-9) and they break the sequence of the narrative to give a note of personal communication with God. Hutchinson, in his notes on the *Complete Works* (p. 544), points out that the refrain is from Ps. 17 CXXXIX and LXXXIX 6. In Psalm CXXXVIII the poet asks the Lord to listen to his prayers, to help him because his heart is full of troubles.

O LORD God of my salvation, I have
cried day *and* night before thee:
2 Let my prayer come before thee:
incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 For my soul is full of troubles:
and my life drawn on night unto the grave.

The same imagery of day and night is used as a background to man’s desperation on earth. God is the psalmist’s only salvation and he longs to communicate with Him. In Psalm CXXXIX there comes an assertion of God’s mercy. It is above all human troubles and therefore it should be trusted and exalted. The evocation of the mercy of the Lord changes the mood of the psalm. Trust and not despair is the feeling.

I will sing the mercies of the Lord
for ever: With my mouth will I make
known thy faithfulness to all
generations.
2. For I have said, Mercy shall be
built forever: thy faithfulness shall
thou establish in the very heavens.
.....
6 For who in the heaven can be
compared unto the LORD? *Who* among
the sons of the mighty can be likened
unto the Lord?

The same confidence in the power and mercy of God is conveyed by Herbert's refrain. The element which justifies this dialogue between God and the poet is presented in Psalm CXXXIX. One can communicate with God because one *is* in Him. God *knows* everything deeply and He, thus, possesses everything whether in light or darkness.

O LORD, thou has searched me, and known me.

.....
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,
but the night shineth as the day: the darkness
and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

.....
15 My substance was not hid from thee when I was
made in secret *and* curiously wrought in the
lowest parts of the earth.

.....
17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto
me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

God is interested in man and knows him as well as light and darkness. God "has searched" and "known" the psalmist and he is grateful. God's thoughts are also precious to him. The refrain in "The Church militant" presents this intimate relationship between God and man and interrupts the narrative tone of the poem. This mood is completely developed in "L'Envoy" as it was said before.

In the description of the development of the Church, images from the Old and New Testament are put in contact through the central figure of Christ. Baptism is a rebirth and the idea of transformation through love is the main link between the episodes. No chronological order is involved. "Such power has mightie Baptisme to produce/For things mishappen, things of highest use" (11. 46-47). In Egypt, the power of the Pharaoh is given to Moses the leader who received the Commandments of God — through the holy work of hermits as Macarius and Anthonie. The new ruler illuminates Egypt and delivers it from the ten plagues described in Exodus. Through Christ, blood nourishes the soul and it is not a curse as it was when all water in Egypt was turned into blood by the wrath of God (7. 20) and the people were thirsty. The natural elements — hail — and the animals — locusts, frogs, lice (Exod. 8, 9) do not turn against man but they provide him means of survival. The waters of the Nile produce baptised Israelites instead of frogs and light is not only a privilege of the children of Israel. The poet succeeds in presenting Christ fighting on the opponent's ground with matched wea-

pons. In Greece, He uses subtley and employs Arts and Learning for His own profit. The speculative methods are provided with fertile matter. Empty silogisms are taken in a "fishers net". This image suggests the gentleness and ingenuity of the siege and this attitude is very proper when one is dealing with Arts. A fisherman's net styly and graciously involves the unwatchful philosophers. They are "at a loss" and do not know even how to spell "Christ-Crosse". They are wrapped in "bands of love" (1. 10). This light, cunning tone is confirmed by "prayers chas"d syllogismes into their den" (1.5). This lightness justifies the expression: religion "fled" into Greece. A fisherman's net reminds us of the apostles — their humble profession overcoming sophisticated philosophy by means of Faith. In the Roman Empire Christ has to be a warrior and the right word to express the conquest religion made there is "subdue" (1.61). It is dealing with military power. But this time Christ's wounds make love, not hate. He lets Himself be wounded to heal man's wounds. He defeats by being defeated.

The Warriar his deere skarres no more resounds,
But seems to yeeld Christ hath the greater wounds
Wounds willingly endur'd to work his blisse,
Who by an ambush lost his Paradise.

(11. 63-)

The word "ambush" also fits the war image that is created. Christ defies man's wounds with His own and lets Himself be entrapped to free man from his own trap. He makes one feel ashamed of his sufferings before His own capacity to stand ordeal. In the Byzantine Empire, the reference to militar force is also made by the allusion to Alexander (1. 71). After Arts and Empire make way for religion to go to Germany and Spain, in England it gets the highest victory — temporal and divine power get together through the union of the crown and the church, as Constantine planned. This union is described as a "mystery" (1. 4) and reminds us again of the nature of the Son — divine and human at the same time. By being nailed on the cross He breaks the partition walls of Antiquity into a new vision of the world (1. 26) in which human resurrection is made possible through His own death. His resurrection proves he was not defeated by his enemies and in the same way the Church keeps going East toward Judgement in spite of its being persecuted by Sin.

As to the nature of the Church, she is described as "thy Church and Spouse" (1. 9), that is, besides her being a self-

containing institution, she is complementary to God. The relationship between bride and bridegroom is the most profound imaginable and it involves a spiritual and physical communion. "At every moment of her existence she is dependent on him as the body on the soul, or the branches on the vine. But on his part he perpetually bestows upon her his heavenly gifts and supernatural powers, continually reveals himself in her, and uses her as his organ for the spread of his kingdom and the Christianizing of the World, till all principalities and powers shall yield free obedience to him, and adore him as the eternal Prophet, Priest and King of the regenerate"⁵. She is not ruled by/decrees of power" but by "bands of love" (1. 10). She is portrayed as possessing a very human charm. Her coming from the East suggests exoticism and the allusion to "spices" reminds one of flavour. "Sweet as the laden boughs of *Noahs* shade vine" (1. 15) adds another reference to taste. The episode evokes the pleasure of drinking — Noah in the vineyard after he had drunk the wine (Gen. IX, 21). But these same elements permit a higher level of interpretation. God shows a particular interest in the Church since He Himself very "early" arose "to plant this vine" (1. 11). "To plant" suggests a real marriage since He puts the seed on earth. It is His spouse and it is fertile. The seed is going to flourish in a garden — an earthy Paradise for man who "by an ambush lost his Paradise" (1. 66). The Apostles and the monks go Westward sowing the words of the Gospel". "Strength levels grounds, Art makes a garden there;/ then showers religion, and makes all to bear" (11. 89-9). Religion showers the fertilized earth and makes the seed grow. Water and religion are connected once again. Water is essential in the cultivation of the garden as baptism performs a mystical unity between Christ and the human being. The sun — which illuminates the course of the church through the poem, throwing its beams ahead and behind — helps to make the imagery very compact — its heat ripens the fruits of the garden. Throughout the Bible, the image of a garden is connected with the idea of the church.

As a garden is taken out of the common waste ground to be appropriated to a more particular use, so the Church of Christ is chosen from among the rest of the world to a particular use. In a garden nothing that is good comes up naturally of itself, but as it is planted and set; so nothing is good in the heart, but what is planted and set by the heavenly Husbandman... In a garden there are varie-

(5) Philip Schaff, p. 508.

ty of flowers and spices; so in a Christian there is some that of every grace. As men delight much in their gardens, to walk there and take their pleasure and take care to fence, weed, water and plant them, so Christ's care and delight is for his church. As gardens use to have fountains and streams running through them, as Paradise had four streams which ran through it; some church is Christ's Paradise, and his Spirit is a spring in the midst of it, to refresh the souls of believers. A garden stands always in need of weeding and dressing; so in the hearts of Christians Christ has always somewhat to do, they would else soon be overgrown and turn wild.⁶

It is not by chance that the vineyard is the particular tree mentioned in the garden. From its boughs there hang sweet grapes. Christ Himself connected the idea of His blood and wine. He was pierced by the Roman soldier and through His blood he was attached to the cross and to humanity. He underwent martyrdom to give man a chance for redemption and His blood became sweet wine. It is His supreme sacrifice for love. In "The Bunch of Grapes" Herbert expresses his extreme gratitude for this ordeal.

But where's the cluster? Where's the taste
Of mine inheritance? Lord, if I must borrow,
Let me as well take up joy, as sorrow.
But can he want the grape, who hath the wine?
I have their fruit and more.
Blessed be God, who prosper'd *Noah's* vine,
And made it bring forth grapes good store.
But much more him I Must adore,
Who of the Laws sowre juice sweet wine did make,
Ev'n God himself being pressed for my sake.
(11. 21-28)

These lines confirm Herbert's point of view in "The Church Militant" the events in the Old Testament are merely a preparation for the coming of Christ. Now, mankind has love and not only laws. The poet is conscious that Christ Himself had to be pressed so that he could drink the sweet wine. This is why Christ is the real foundation of the Church. The episode of Christ's being pierced by the soldier (1. 69) is told by St. John (XIX 34), the apostle of love — "a religious genius of the highest order — not indeed for planting, but for watering, not for outward action and aggressive work, but for inward contemplation, and insight into the mystery of Christ's person" (7) This is, indeed, Herbert's approach to Jesus. "For

(6) Alexander Cruder, *A Complete Concordance to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia, 1872), p. 226.

(7) Schaff, p. 415.

the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John I, 23). He does not preach only, but He acts in a way anyone can understand. This is what Herbert's poem means to portray. Therefore it is not a sermon but a dramatization of His pilgrimage. Vivid action is much more convincing. "The Church Militant" presents the Church as a pilgrim, humbly walking, knocking at all doors — no "gout or fur" (1. 198) prevents her from doing that — going Westward bending with the cross as a staff. At a certain point of the course, Christ Himself is the pilgrim.

The great heart stroops, and taketh from the dust
A sad repentance, not the spoils of lust
Hitting his spear, lest it should pierce again
Him in his members, who for him was slain.
(11. 67-70)

The rhythm is slow and indicates suffering. Christ is a Heart sufficiently interested in the dust man is made of to look for repentance in it and not for the remanent of sin. God created man and made a covenant with His people (Psalm CXXXIX) of which Jesus Christ is the main fulfiller. He will not break it in spite of man's unfaithfulness. His cross is the most important symbol of this covenant and He was nailed on it to fasten the agreement (1. 24).

The Ark is the other symbol for the covenant God made with His chosen throughout the poem. It first appears in connection with the flood. When God was angry at men's sins and decided to destroy everything on earth, He decided to spare the obedient Noah and his family. The ark was his means of survival. Within it, Noah and his family were safe by the mercy of the Lord. The ark follows a pilgrimage throughout the poem showing how the covenant of the Lord advances throughout time. Noah's ark "rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8, 4). Abraham — the obedient servant who did not hesitate to sacrifice his son at the will of God — is chosen to keep the covenant of the Lord. Although no ark is mentioned in this biblical episode, Herbert uses the symbol to give the idea of continuity. "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations" (Gen. 17, 9). His descendants carry the Ark which contained the two tables of the law Moses received from God. It was taken by the Philistines (I Sam. 5, 1) until it was brought back to the house of Israel in David's day and Solomon built a temple to house it. It was necessary

for the people of Israel to prepare their hearts for the return of the ark, to “put away the strange gods . . . and serve Him only” (I Sam. 7, 3). Salomon, rather than David, was chosen by God to build His temple because he was not a man of war. He chose carefully all the material to be used, knowing that everything comes from God and is to be returned to Him. “But who *am* I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (I Chron. 29, 14). Herbert feels the same way and tries to do his best to build his Temple. He revised his poems carefully and when he died he did not think they were ready to publish unless they would help some wandering soul to undergo the same conflict. He was very conscious of his task. He knew that the first temple in Jerusalem was superior to the second and third. “The second Temple could not reach the first:/And the late Reformation never durst/Compare with ancient times and purer years;/But in the Jews and us deserveth tears” (11. 225.8). The images of the temple and the ark are always connected with the image of the dove. Christ’s Spouse is as chaste as a dove, in addition to being sweet as Noah’s shady vine. In the Bible the two images are also connected — Noah sends a dove to find out the level of the waters. It is a sort of messenger — *l’envoy*. A similar idea is conveyed when the ark was led to Solomon’s temple — it was put in a holy place under the wings of a cherubim. “For the cherubim spread forth *their* wings over the place of the Ark, and the cherubim covered the ark, and the staves thereof above” (2 Cron. 5, 8). Wings are protecting the covenant of the Lord to keep it pure and unviolated. Indeed, when they opened the ark, they did not find there any of the gifts they had put inside it during its journey. It had kept only the two tables of the law — the original message God had given to man. The covenant was intact and nothing exterior was permitted to interfere. This is the meaning of chastity of the church, described in line 15.

Herbert uses the image of sin as a whore to contrast with the bride. Eastern and Western Babylon were centers of vice in the East and West. The two prosperous cities were the cradle of great civilizations but their fertility degenerated in an orgy. In the poem, they are linked to the idea of glory, pleasure (11. 135, 142) and money (11. 126, 250-1). “Glorie was his chief instrument of old:/Pleasure succeded straight, when that grew cold/ Which soon was blown to such a mightie flame” (1. 143-5). Sin will not suffer just to

have a shepherd's hook as a scepter or thorns as crown as Christ did. Good actions are not necessary to build it a temple. Sin can buy oracles, shrines and thrones to put up with its fame (1. 128). Its throne in Western Babylon is much richer to "defray" (1.213) his journey from the East. Religion, on the contrary, sides with poverty (7. 252). America should be glad, thus, to have its gold taken to England. Venality is, Sin's main characteristic. Its "contagious infidelity" 1. 158) always in hope of "carnall joy" (1. 149) is a contrast to the chastity of the Church. It is always "breaking her peace and tainting her good name" (1. 106). The image of the ruffian conveys exactly the same idea. Sin is a "rogue" (1. 149), a "debauched ruffian". (1. 164) a "gallant" (1. 129) and the verb used to describe his steps is "to sneak" (1. 121). "And being craftier much then Goodness was,/He left behing him gar-risons of sinnes" (1. 124-5). Astuce and malice (1. 237) are his weapons to sell his lies.

The world came in with hands and purses full
To this great lottery, and all would pull
But all was glorious cheating, brave deceit,
Where some poor truths were shuffled for a bait
To credit him, and to discredit those
Who after him should braver truths disclose.
(11. 133-8)

Sin uses all kinds of disguises to give a solid appearance to its power. "Anchorisme and retiredness" from Egypt, tearing from Greece, stateliness from Rome (1. 186). In this meantime, sits by "counting his victories". (1.190). It cheats the most subtle nations — Egypt, Greece, Rome — by "bewitching" them (1. 193). Rome does not have to make captives as old Babylon did — the nations go there in a voluntary transmigration. "All poste to Rome" (1. 195). This way, Sin is able to make jest Christ's three offices: Prophet in Greece, Emperor in old Rome and Priest in new Rome. Sin is religion in new Rome since the Pops themselves use their power for futile purposes and money is spent without any criteria.

As the Church sowed Christ's words, Sin also "takes heart"

(1. 128) and "sows (1. 107) its garden on earth.

At first he got to Egypt, and did sow
Gardens of gods, which ev'ry year did grow
Fresh and fine deities. They were at a great cost,
Who for a God clearly a sallet lost.
(11. 107-10)

In Greece it also made a “garden-bed” (1. 127). However, this garden does not feed man as Christ’s garden did. Although all kinds of feeding images are associated With Sin — “They/Eastern and Western Babylon/are sinnes nipples, feeding the east and West” (11. 220) — it does not provide man with food, in fact. Noah’s shady vine and Christ’s blood nourish mankind. But the rivers in Sin’s garden are polluted and the water is not worthwhile to drink: “When *Sein* shall swallow *Tiber* and the *Thames*/ by letting in them both polutes her streams”. Besides, man does not use what he has for the right purposes and adores his food instead of eating it.

Ah, what a thing devoid of grace,
Adoring garlick a humble face,
Begging his food of that which he may eat
Staring the while her worshipeth his meat!
Who makes a root his God, how low is he,
If God and man be sever’d, infinitely!
What wretchedness can give him any room,
Whose house is foul, while he adres his broom?
(11. 111-18)

The reference to “onions and garlick” reminds us of the ingratitude of the people of Israel toward God. They were given the promised land but they missed “the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions and the garlic” (Num. 10,5). Sin feeds people with “pills of sublimate” (1. 132): shame is involved in a sweet layer while Christ’s blood is made sweet through His real sufferance.

In “The Church Militant” Sin is darkness, in opposition to the Church, “trimme as the light” (1. 14). Goshen was darkeness in contrast to baptized Egypt full of lighth (1. 43). “Old and new Babylon are to hell and night,/As is the moon and sunne to heaven and light” (1. 214-15). To show this contrast is the main purpose of Herbert’s imagery of day and night”. It is the privation of light that is the burden of his grief, not any possible consequences. . . He may not be able to see the light behind the darkness of the immediate moment but he never long falters in his confidence that it is really there” (8).

Herbert’s attempt to describe the development of the Church before the Almighty God sitting on His throne is not

(8) Helen C. White, *The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience* (New York), pp. 189-9.

as successful as his lyrics on *The Temple*. Although in "The Church Militant" and in his lyrics he uses the same images of a bird, a flower, of day and night, "The Church Militant" lacks the grace and homeliness with which he "domesticates wonder" ⁽⁹⁾ and which makes the greatness of his best poetry. He comes near to that once again in "L'envoy". Mr. Hutchinson, in his notes on *The Temple* (p. 543), points out that maybe Herbert himself came to recognize that he was much more inclined to write lyrics than long poems of this kind.



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(9) White, p. 196.