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Theological Element in George Herbert's "The Temple" with the Special Reference to Atonement

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Abstract— *This research paper aims to investigate the soteriological and Christological elements in the religious poem, The Temple composed by George Herbert with the particular reference to the Biblical doctrine of Atonement, which is a theological principle belonging to both Christology as it demonstrates the work of Jesus Christ and Soteriology as t consequently salivation, It is possible to believe that the religious poetry of the poet is concerning several Christian doctrines and piety dealing with Anglican Theology. Herbert is a metaphysical poet-priest well known for pastoral sensitivity and sacramental verses, dealing with the principle of sanctification. The Temple is a collection of poems, and the poet won fame and name due to the cycle of poetry, which is a lyrical work, consisting of literary reflections on Christian faith, and doctrines, which is the sphere of Sacramental Theology. The poet focuses rustic elements work of Atonement and its objective and subjective factors in this poetic collection. The major theme in this review is the theological doctrine of the Passion and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of the Calvary for the remission of the Human sins. Besides, the notion of Christ as the second Adam, the significance of the crown of thorn and religious, theological themes is utmost significant as they offer something of worth to the modern Evangelical Anglicans. The Doctrine of Sanctification demonstrates the evangelical priority of the cross and Christ centred doctrines.*

Keywords— ***Christological, doctrine, Evangelical, element, Herbert, poetry, religious, Soteriological, sanctification.***

I. INTRODUCTION

There are several elements of Biblical Christology and Soteriology in Gorge Herbert's Poetry. "Christology is derived from two Greek words, *Christos* meaning the Anointed One, and *Logos.* Christology means the "study of Christ." "Biblical Christology deals with the doctrine of Christ" (Kumar, 45). According to B.S. Moses Kumar," Soteriology is derived from two Greek words, *soter* meaning saviour, and *Logos*, envisaging the Biblical doctrine of salvation"(Kumar 47). There occur many themes of the Biblical Doctrine of Salvation in the religious poetry of Herbert. The idea of Atonement is a multi-dimensional theme of theology. It belongs to Christology as well as to Soteriology and is a resting ground for several theological ideas.

The English novelist and literary critic Charles Williams remarked, "Religious poetry is poetry, not religion. It is related to it" (qtd. in McGill 386), and it relates us to it will the religious poetry of George Herbert is inherently related to many aspects of Christian doctrine and piety. Herbert skilfully relates these truths to his readers. In this essay, we will examine the way that Herbert relates his understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement through the poetry of The Temple. Third, we will look at the specific themes relating to the Atonement that appear in this collection of poems.

George Herbert (1593—1633), a metaphysical poet, stands out among these seventeenth-century versifiers for his pastoral sensitivity. Herbert was born into an aristocratic family and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. At Cambridge, he was elected to the post of Public Orator for the university1 (Wall 13) in 1619 and served a term in Parliament in 1624. However, he had studied divinity at Cambridge and was ordained as a deacon. Herbert put off ordination as a priest until 1630. If Izaak Walton's account is to be trusted, was a justified

hope, because King James was reported to have said "[t]hat he found the Orat01's learning and wisdom above his age or wit "3. Ultimately, however, these political ambitious went unfilled, and in 1630, Herbert was ordained as a priest in the Church of England, becoming the parson of the rural village of Bremerton. At Bremerton, he lived, as reported in Walton's admittedly idealised portrait, "a life so full of charity, humility, and all Christian virtues, that it deserves the eloquence of St. Chrysostom to commend and declare it "4 Herbert's brief but lauded ministry continued until he died in 1633 (Walton 231).

As a poet, Herbert is considered by some to be "one of the best lyric poets who has written in the English language "(Walton 246). His work benefits from the Renaissance's recovery of the classics and innovations in the physical sciences. The influences can be seen in the style and subjects of his poetry.[7.] Herbert's poems bear the mark that is most associated with the school of metaphysical poets. The conceit, which can take two forms: "The extended conceit, comparing two unlike things at great length, and with considerable ingenuity, and the telescoped conceit, compressing an unusual combination into a brief space."[2] (Lewis-Anthony) He employs these techniques very effectively in some of the poems we will look at later on. In addition to the conceit, Herbert stands out for his use of "pattern poems" in which Of conceits are found in poems such as "Church Lock and Key," "The Agony," and "The Bunch of Grapes."

The subject of a poem is reflected in its typographical appearance. Yet, Herbert's particular genius goes far beyond the techniques he employs. To judge genuinely the place that Herbert holds in the English literary canon, we must consider the assessment of W. H. Auden that "since all of Herbert's poems are concerned with the religious life, they cannot be judged by aesthetic standards alone," and that his poetry is one of "the finest expressions we have of Anglican piety at its best." (Auden 9-10)

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

T. S. Eliot rightly observes, "the poems on which George Herbert's reputation is based are those constituting the collection called The Temple" (236). This cycle of poems provides us not only with the most revered of Herbert's lyrical work but also with literary reflections on Christian faith and doctrine. We will explore three elements of these poems, including their pastoral focus, their emphasis on Christ's saving work, and their joining of the objective and subjective aspects of the Atonement.

First, The Temple displays a quality of pastoral concern and encouragement to devotional practice, when the priesthood was often treated as little more than a means to secure a living, and a respected place in society, Herbert accepted his vocation with a genuine sense of responsibility to Christ and the church, as evidenced by this declaration that he was reported to have made on the night of his ordination as a priest: "But in God, and his service, is an ampleness of all joy, and pleasure, and no satiety. And I will now use all my endeavours to bring my relations and dependents to love and reliance on him, who never fails those that trust him "11 (Walton 247) This desire to bring people into dependence on Christ extended not only to his priestly duties at the altar but also to the "endeavour" of his literary ventures. Though The Temple was left unpublished in Herbert's lifetime, he gave instructions regarding its publication shortly before his death. On his deathbed he asked that these instructions be related to his friend Nicholas Ferrer: "Desire him to read it; and then if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected pour soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies." (Walton 271)

An altar of his heart and asks that Christ's "blessed Sacrifice be mine "13 the collection ends with "Love (Ill)," where Christ is personified as Love who "bore the blame" of the speaker's sin. These verses are ruminations on various aspects of Christ's work from a variety of different perspectives. While these poems deal with the whole range of the Christian life—such as the church, prayer, confession, the liturgical calendar—the work of Christ is a theme that is woven throughout. They display "the intensely Christocentric quality of [Herbert's] thought and devotion, and his remarkable capacity to hold together things often believed to be separable or opposed to one another." [1] For Herbert, all aspects of the Christian life are brought together in Christ.

Third, Herbert brings together the objective and subjective elements of Christ's work. The work of Jesus Christ in his death on the cross of Calvary for the sinful Humanity and that work of Atonement is significant because it has an excellent place in the Christian faith. It displays a vital relation to Jesus Christ. William Evans rightly remarks:

> Christianity is a religion of Atonement distinctively. The elimination of the doctrine of the death of Christ from the Faith that bears His name would mean the surrender of its uniqueness and claim to be the only true religion, the supreme

1 A. M. Allchin, Preface to Herbert, The Country Parson, The Temple, xii.

> and final revelation from God to the sons of men. Its redemption feature distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. If you surrender this distinctive doctrine from its creed, then this supreme religion is brought down to the level of many other prevailing religious systems. Christianity is not merely a system of ethics; it is the history of redemption through Jesus Christ, the personal Redeemer. (69)

The objective/subjective distinction is often employed to categorise theories of the Atonement, which emphasise either the salvific efficacy of Christ's work as distinguished from its appropriation by the individual (objective), or the effect that Christ's work brings about in the life of the individual (subjective). The joining of these two elements is intrinsic to the nature of Herbert's poetry. He presents the real need for Christ's sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God[2] in such moving and beautiful language that the hearer cannot help, but be subjectively affected by such an eloquent portrayal of the severity of sin and the blessing of redemption. One such example is found in "Sighs and Groans," in which the author cries out,

> "Oh, do not use me/After my sins!" (1—2), going on to plead,
>
> Oh, do not fill me
>
> With the turn'd vial of thy bitter wrath!
>
> For thou hast other vessels full of blood,
>
> A part of which my Savior emptied hath,
>
> Even unto death: since he died for my good,
>
> Oh, do not kill me! (19—24)

Such a depiction invites the reader not only to comprehend the reality of the sinners' predicament but also to feel the force of God's wrath over sin and to rejoice over the relief brought by the Saviour' s blood. In this way, Herbert brings together his pastoral focus and his emphasis on the work of Christ to urge his readers toward sanctity and devotion through a skilful articulation of the Atonement in beautified verse. [16] The beauty and eloquence of Herbert's poetry are meant to lead to a fuller appreciation of Christ's work.

III. THEMES OF ATONEMENT IN THE TEMPLE

Atonement in "The Sacrifice"

Having looked at the broader characteristics of The Temple, we will now focus in on some of the particular atonement themes that arise out of it. It will not be an exhaustive treatment of what Herbert has to say concerning the Atonement in these verses, but rather, a drawing out of the themes that characterise them. We will begin with a look at the second poem in the collection, "The Sacrifice."[i] Consisting of 62 stanzas, this poem is an extended account of the Passion, events from the garden to the cross, with Christ as the speaker, describing,

"that Love which seeks us and the grief our response or lack of response causes him "17. It reflects on the irony of the incarnation, constantly juxtaposing Christ's graciousness with the sorrow, and abuse that he endures at the hands of his creatures. This is expressed by his lament that though he is a king, "yet by my subjects am condemned to die/a servile death in servile company/' (234—35), ending with the question that concludes each stanza: "Was ever grief like mine?" While this subject of the humility displayed in Christ's incarnation and sacrifice runs throughout the collection, this poem contains several other themes that characterise it as well.

First, we find a clear emphasis on the problem of God's wrath. Christ's suffering is portrayed as a necessary consequence of God's

22:42, "Oh let this cup pass, if it is thy pleasure:/Was ever grief like mine?" (23—24). Lying behind this passage are Old Testament notions of the cup of God's wrath.[3] Again, Herbert draws out Christ's bearing of the Father's displeasure as the mockers at the cross cry out, "Now heal thyself Physician; not come down" (221; emphasis his). Christ responds, lamenting in the next stanza, "Alas! I did so, when I left my crown/And Father's smile for you, to feel his frown" (222—23). Christ's death is seen as the only way to address the problem:

> In healing, not myself, there doth consist All that salvation, which ye now resist;
>
> Your safety in my sickness doth subsist:
>
> Was ever grief like mine? (225--28)

Herbert draws a picture of Christ's suffering in which Christ bears the Father's wrath and in which his "sickness" is the means for securing "safety' from God's wrath.

Second, "The Sacrifice" emphasises the cost of Christ's redemption with mercantile language. This is brought out by the description of Judas' betrayal. Though Judas sold

will deal more fully with this subject of the problem of God's wrath in a subsequent section.

3 Though this idea is found in many OT passages, Isa. 51:17, 22 displays it in a particularly vivid way.

Christ into his enemies' hands for only thirty pieces of silver, it was the "Who at three hundred did the ointment prize,/Not half so sweet as my sweet sacrifice" (18—19). Later on, Christ speaks of being crucified between two thieves, "As he that for some robbery suffereth./Alas! What have I stolen from you? Death" (230—31). What we see in these lines, then, is Herbert portraying Christ as offering a sacrifice of more excellent value than that of the ointment with which he was anointed, and as "stealing' death from those who crucify him.

Third, Herbert gives a prominent place to the notion of Christ as the second Adam. This is evident in his description of the significance of the crown of thorns, in which Christ cries,

So sits the earth's great curse in Adam's fall

> Upon my head: so I remove it all
>
> From the' earth unto my brows, and bear the thrall: Was ever grief like mine? (165—69)

Christ's work proves to be the reversal of Adam's work: "Man stole the fruit, but I must climb the tree;/The tree of life to all, but only me" (202— 03).[4] As the new Adam, Christ ushers in a new creation through the suffering of sacrifice:

Lo, here I hang, charged with a world of sin, The greater world o' the' two; for that came in Bywords, but this by sorrow I must win:

Was ever grief like mine? (205—08)

God spoke the first world, the "greater world," into being through his word. The second world, dominated by sin, must be won back through his sacrifice. That which Adam lost through disobedience is to be regained through Christ's obedience in suffering and, ultimately, death.

Finally, "The Sacrifice" ends by pointing the reader toward the religious experience of Christ's atoning work. In the second to last stanza, Christ connects his suffering with the establishment of the sacraments, saying, "For they will pierce my side, I full well know;/That as sin came so that Sacraments might flow" (246—47). Herbert is again displaying a dependence on the interpretive methods of early church fathers with typological imagery. As Eve came from the side of Adam, ultimately bringing sin into the world, so water, and wine, symbolic of the water of baptism and the wine of the Eucharist, come from Christ's pierced side. It is through these sacraments that the sin of Adam and Eve is reversed and that believers experience the effects of Christ's sacrifice.

As one of the first poems in Herbert's cycle, "The Sacrifice" sets the tone in many ways for the rest of the collection. It is Herbert's longest and fullest meditation on the death of Christ, and it contains many of the atonement themes that are found in the poems following it. This being the case, we will take these four themes— 1) the problem of God's wrath, 2) the cost of redemption, 3) Christ as the second Adam, and 4) the religious experience of the Atonement—as a kind of template for evaluating more broadly the nature of the Atonement in The Temple.

1 Atonement throughout The Temple

The first place we will look to see further evidence of the problem of God's wrath is "Faith," another poem rich with pictures of Christ's work. It starts by stating a question:

Lord, how couldst thou so much appease

Thy wrath for sin, as when man's sight was dim,

And could see little, to regard his ease,

And bring by Faith all things to him? (1—4)

Evident here is the critical terminology of wrath and appeasement, positing God's wrath toward sin as a problem, which must be overcome. How is this barrier between God and man surmounted? Through Faith appropriating Christ's work as it is revealed throughout the biblical story of redemption. It is "a rare outlandish that "apprehension Cui/d so well my foot,/That I can walk too well near" (9—12). This root is the remedy of Christ as the promised seed, which cures the heel of man bruised by the serpent (Gen. 3:15). The speaker goes on:

> Faith makes me anything or all
>
> That I believe is in the sacred story:
>
> And where sin placeth me in Adam's fall,
>
> Faith sets me higher in his glory. (17—20)

Christ as the second Adam overcomes the sin of the first Adam, and it is Faith in this "sacred story' which takes us out of Adam and puts us into Christ. This Faith in what

4 This kind of typology shows up frequently in Herbert's work. This particular tree typology goes back to Irenaeus. As H. D. MacDonald explains, "In one of [Irenaeus's] many analogies it appeared to him a grave reason for Christ's death on the cross to say that, as a tree had been the cause of the fall, so it fitted that another tree—the tree of the cross—should be the cause of redemption." H. D. MacDonald, the Atonement, and the Death of Christ: In Faith, Revelation, and History (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 126.

Christ has done also gives a hope that extends beyond the disintegration of the body into dust, "counting e[s], [H]urry grain/With exact and most particular trust,/Reserving all for flesh again" (41—44). Christ's incarnational presence in the world is the culmination of the redemptive promises, providing the means to appease the wrath of the Father and giving hope for the final resurrection.

The barrier between God and man is displayed even in the title of "Church Lock and Key." The speaker confesses that "I know it is my sin, which locks thirty ears,/And binds thy hands" (1—2). He implores, yet hears Oh God, only for his blood's sake, which pleads for me:

For though sins plead too, yet like stones they make

His blood's sweet current is much louder to be. (9—12)

Man's sin is a barrier between himself and God, which keeps God from hearing man's sorrows and acting to relieve them. Both Christ's blood and man's sins compete for God's ear, pleading on man's behalf. Yet, Herbert envisions the combination of these sins and blood as a rushing stream. The current of Christ's blood rushes over the stones of man's sin, causing a noisy roar. The greater man's sin, the higher is Chrissy sacrifice amplified, proving to be the key that unlocks the way to the Father's presence.

In their focus on God's wrath, the barrier of sin, and the interposition of Christ's blood, "Faith" and "Church Lock and Kef' both serve to depict the Atonement in penal and substitutionary language.20 "Faith" grounds Christ's work in the entire biblical story, from the promised seed of Eve to the confident hope of final resurrection. Herbert's typological interpretation of Scripture is evident in this exposition of redemptive history, as we will see again later. "Church Lock and Kef' communicates the necessity of Christ's sacrifice through imagery which eloquently depicts his blood as a current streaming pleading louder than man's sin. This creative and beautiful imagery not only adorns the doctrine of the Atonement but also drives its reader to offer a response of devotion. The shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary is the ground for the justification of Humanity. It is a soteriological elopement in the poem.

The second theme is that of the cost of redemption. This cost is featured in "Redemption," an exchange between a poor tenant and a wealthy landowner. It starts,

> Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
>
> Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
>
> And make a suit unto him, to afford
>
> A new small-rented lease, and cancel the' old. (1—4)

The tenant seeks his Lord "In heaven at this manor," only to be told that he has gone "About some land, which he had dearly bought/Long since on earth, to take possession" (5—8). The tenant goes about seeking him "in great resorts/ln cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts" (10—11), only to find him among "thieves and murderers: there I him espied,/Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, and died" (13—14; emphasis his). The work of salvation was finished on the cross, as when Jesus Christ died on the cross, he cried loudly. "It is finished", and the Bible says in John 19.30," When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (KJV). Therefore, salvation is " Sola Fide" process for Humanity.

The tenant's request for a new lease is representative of the replacement of the old covenant with the new. Christ, as a wealthy Lord, descends from heaven to appropriate, not a wealthy estate, but a land peopled by thieves and sinners, revealing the nature of the new covenant. Allister McGrath points out that "while also exploring the idea of the shame and humility of the cross, Herbert can bring out the legal and financial dimension of redemption," noting as well that "Herbert brings out the costliness of redemption, and also . . . the idea of the humility of God in the incarnation." (McGrath 3543-54) .The purchase of a new covenant is cast is explicitly legal terms. However, the price is one unique to legal transactions—the death of the purchaser. The ironic turn of Christ's incarnation runs through this poem as well, showing that his purchase unto death is designed to establish a new covenant, not with those who are highly esteemed, but with the most despised. Herbert again picks up mercantile language to communicate the value of redemption in "Affliction (Il)

> ." The speaker pleads with God,
>
> Kill me notes/ry day,
>
> Thou Lord of life; since thy one death for me
>
> Is more than all my deaths can be,
>
> Though I in broken pay
>
> Die over each hour of Methuselah's stay. (1—5)

If the speaker could die repeatedly, no number of instalments or "broken pay" could match the worth of the death offered by the "Lord of life." Even the accumulated tears stemming from men collective sorrow would only serve to "discolour thy most bloody sweat" (10). Since man's misfortune is insufficient, the speaker can trust only in Christ's work: "Thy cross took up in one [By way of impress, all my future moan" (14— 15). The cross offers an "imprest," or advance payment on the speaker's future mourning, carrying the sense both that Christ's suffering

on the cross is a payment of moaning or suffering for all the future sins of the speaker, and that all the speake1Zs mourning in the future will be for Christ's suffering on the cross.

This poem employs a dialogue style characteristic of Herbert in which the poet speaks to God as the assumed listener. As one critic points out, "There are in these dialogue situations poems of penitence, colloquy and petition, and those most peculiarly Herbert poems concerned with God's bargain with a man or the contractual conditions of salvation " (Dolan 125).In this particular dialogue, the conditions for salvation discussed centre around some assumptions that are consistent with the concerns of Anselm's theory of satisfaction? There is a satisfaction that must be made to God but which cannot be met by the poet, no matter how much sorrow or how many of his deaths he may offer. This infinite debt may be satisfied only by the unique and immense sacrifice of the incarnate Christ, making the cost of the redemption that he extends incalculable. In both "Redemption" and "Affliction (Il)," then, Christ's sacrificial death is understood to be the invaluable price at which the

The new covenant is established, and the believer's sins are forgiven.[5]

Third, Herbert also stresses the importance of understanding Christ to be the second Adam. In "The Holdfast," the poet sees the hopelessness of trying to observe God's decrees strictly and instead trusts in God alone. However, even speaking of placing trust in God can be misleading: "Nay, to trust in him, was also his:/We must confess that nothing is our own" (6—7). Having established that Faith in God and confession of his emptiness are gifts in and of themselves; he goes on in the last stanza to say,

That all things were more ours by being his.

> What Adam had, and forfeited for all,
>
> Christ keepeth now, who cannot fail or fall. (12—14)

Why is the speaker so confident that his Faith and confession are themselves gifts from God? Because Christ has succeeded in the same role, in which Adam failed. If Adam's actions "forfeited for all" a sinless status, then even more surely does Christ's Faith attain Faith for those who believe in him. The critical point here is that the actions of these two men set the course for Humanity. Where the first Adam secures a sinful state that all men receive, the second Adam secures righteousness that is even more certain for those to whom he grants Faith. Herbert is here giving a poetic voice to the second Adam theology, which is articulated in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

> "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

"Prayer (Il)" is another verse, which depends on Adamic typology.

> The poet ruminates on Adam's pre-lapsarian state,
>
> Before that, sin turned flesh to stone,
>
> And all our lump to leaven;
>
> A fervent sigh might well have blown our innocent earth to heaven. (5—8)

At that time, Adam was able "to heaven from Paradise go,/As from one room another/' (11—12). However, Adam once was able to pass between the earthly and heavenly realms with ease; his sin sundered this close communion. Christ, however, has brought earth and heaven together, restoring the unity, which Adam shattered:

> Thou hast restored us to tl•üs ease By this thy head/only blood;
>
> Which I can go to when I please,
>
> And leave the' earth to their food. (13—16)

As the second Adam, Christ's work has consequences beyond dealing with the guilt or penalty of sin. It has cosmic effects, uniting the broken realms of creation. Chris "heav'nly blood" offered as a sacrifice on earth reconciles these realms and makes heaven once more accessible to man. The way that man appropriates this reconciliation is through the reception of the Eucharist, which Herbert understands to be "a means of transforming grace that restores the close communion between man and God that Adam enjoyed in Paradise "25 This understanding of the Eucharist as the site of the believer's reconciliation to God leads us to the final theme of the religious experience of the Atonement.

In "The Holdfast Herbert speaks of Christ's work as the second Adam achieving the sinless status which Adam forfeited, showing that the actions of these two men are determinative not simply for themselves, but humankind as a whole. In "Prayer (Il)," the cosmic effects of Christ's second Adam status are considered, showing that access to heaven is brought to earth through the blood of his sacrifice. These poems reveal that, for Herbert, second Adam typology is essential for grasping the full

5 Another example of redemption spoken of in mercantile language is "Ungratefulness."

consequences of Christ's saving work, both personal and cosmic(Young 138).

The final theme is that of the sacramental experience of the Atonement. Of the various topics we have examined, this is perhaps the one, which is most distinctive to Herbert. As Owen F. Cummings observes, perhaps the Welsh-born Herbert "absorbed something of that indigenous Celtic spirituality, a spirituality marked by a sacramental sense" ((Cummings 4).In "The Agony," Herbert notes that there are two things in the world which are little considered or measured: sin and Love. For those who would begin to know the seriousness of the crime, he invites them to the Mount of Olives to see

A man so wrung with pains that all his hair, His skin, his garments bloody be.

Sin is that press and vice, which forceth pain

To hunt his a•uel food through ev'ry vein. (9—12)

He offers another invitation to those who would begin to consider Love:

Who knows not to Love, let him assay

And taste that juice, which on the cross a pike Did set again abroach; then let him say If ever he did feel the like.

Love [6]is that liquor sweet and most divine,

Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine. (12—18)

In these stanzas, Herbert employs the image of a winepress to illustrate how the press of man's sin upon Christ results in the shedding of his blood. Evident again, here is the holding together of the objective and subjective elements of Christ's work discussed earlier. Sin brings about the objective necessity of Christ's sacrifice, here vividly portrayed as a press, which extracts his blood from him. Subjectively, the reader is invited to taste of this blood in the Eucharistic wine, thus experiencing the full weight of Love in Christ. For Herbert, Christ's saving work is not merely something to which the communicant looks back. Still, it is something, which, in some sense, he truly appropriates through the Eucharist. R. V. Young draws this out in noting that "the closing couplet [of "The Agony implies strongly that what is to human sensation wine is, in the divine economy, the blood of Christ: what 'God feels' is undoubtedly more reliable than what the poetic persona tastes "28 Herbert, as a proponent of the Anglican via media, articulates a Eucharistic view which sounds close to an affirmation of transubstantiation, though he elsewhere critiques elements of the Catholic Eucharist ceremony.[7]Sufficient to say, Herbert views the Eucharist as communicating the real presence of Christ in a way that ensures a vivid experience of the Lord's saving work for the communicant.[8]

In "Holy Baptism (I)," Herbert draws the typological connection between baptism and Christ has pierced side that was displayed earlier in "The Sacrifice." When confronted with his sin, the poet looks back to his baptismal water, "Which is above the heavens, whose spring and rent/ls in my dear Redeemer's pierced side" (5—6). These baptismal waters either "stop our sins from growing thick and wide" (8),

Or else give tears to drown them, as they grow.

In you, Redemption measures all my time,

And spreads the plaster equal to the crime:

You taught the Book of Life my name, that so

Whatever future sins should me miscall,

Your first acquaintance might discredit all. (9—14)

Herbert here portrays Christ's accomplishment of redemption and its application as a unity; that which he accomplishes on the cross is applied and continually experienced through the baptismal waters. These things are held together by the typological connection of baptismal water flowing from heaven and through Christ's side to cleanse the sinner.

Herbert's persistent emphasis on the sacraments and the recipienexperience of the Atonement through them evidences another broader characteristic of The Temple that we have already noted. As an Anglican priest, Herbert viewed the administration of the sacraments as one of his primary pastoral duties. The appeals to proper and appreciative reception of the sacraments in poems such as "The Agony' and "Holy Baptism (I)"[31] leave no doubt that Herbert carefully prepared his congregation, instructing them in grateful reception of the Eucharist and baptism.[32] In this way, Herbert's poems and his priestly role of serving at the altar were means through which he

6 Young, Doctrine, and Devotion, 118.

7 See "The Holy Communion."

7 See "The Holy Communion."

7 Cummings comments on the pervasive presence of the Eucharist in The Temple: "Herbert was a son of the Reformation, yes, but in the via media Anglican, eschewing any disparagement of the centrality of the Eucharist. His sensibility is such that it would be inordinately tedious to make reference to every occasion on which the Eucharist is alluded to or mentioned." "The Liturgical George Herbert," 441.

ministered Christ's saving work to his parishioners tangibly and experientially.

IV. THE RELEVANCE OF HERBERT IN THE PRESENT SCENARIO.

While appreciation for Herbert has continued to grow in literary circles, his place of respect in the church today is not nearly as prominent. Thankfully, this has not always been true. The Puritan Richard Baxter's quotations of Herbert's poems in his The Saints Rest "undoubtedly helped to secure 'low' and non-Anglican readers for Herbert, "33[ii] while Charles Spurgeon "commends George Herbert's poetry, 'suffused with Love for his dear Lord '"34 By his testimony, Herbert wrote The Temple for the improvement of the church. I would like to offer two specific ways in which the evangelical church in the twenty-first century can gain a similar appreciation for Herbert through the appropriation of his thinking on the Atonement.

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[31] Other poems that can be included in this discussion are "The Holy Communion," "Conscience," "The Bunch of Grapes," and "Love (Ill)."

[32] In A Priest to the Temple, Herbert insists of the Country Parson that he "considers and looks into the ignorance, or carelessness of his flock, and accordingly applies himself with Catechizing's, and lively exhortations, not on the Sunday of the Communion only (for then it is too late) but the Sunday, or Sundays before the Communion, or on the Eves of all those days." The Country

Parson, The Temple, 85—86.

[33] Summers, George Herbert, 16.

[34] Quoted in Ian Randall, "Live Much Under the Shadow of the Cross: Atonement and Evangelical Spirituality," in The Atonement Debate: Papers From the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement, ed. Derek Tidball, David Holborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 300.

First, we have seen that Herbert's emphasis on God's wrath over sin is consistent with what has come to be known as penal substitutionary Atonement. This doctrine is often criticised today, incurring labels such as "divine child abuse" for supposing that the Father would execute his wrath in the death of his Son. While there have been any number of responses offered by defenders of this atonement theory, many still find such criticism convincing. Meeting such criticism with exegetical and theological counter-arguments is undoubtedly essential, but it might be that Herbert's moving portrayals of Christ's work as willing self-sacrifice could go a long way toward dispelling any misguided notion that the Father's wrath over sin pits him against his Son. This is not a relationship of abuse, but one of unified purpose in Love for sinful Humanity. This Love is often communicated better through verse than through argumentation.

Second, Herbert sacramental theology certainly has something to offer the evangelical church today. Evangelicalism undeniably maintains a tendency toward devaluation of the sacraments and other ritual forms of worship. Certainly, Herbert's coupling of a high view of the sacraments with warm evangelical piety could help give modern evangelicals an appreciation for the central place the sacraments should hold in the life of the church. It is at the communion table and at the baptismal font that Christ's saving work is most vividly made known to us. This experience of Christ's Atonement through sacramental means can only serve to magnify the evangelical priority of cross-centred piety. In these ways and numerous others, George Herbert is poetic.

V. CONCLUSION

George Herbert was the product of his age and training as an Anglican priest. His Magnus Opus displays his Passion for the Love of Jesus Christ. Therefore he expresses the theological themes of Soteriology and Christology propounded by some certain verses of the Holy Scripture. Even in this modern world, his poetry preaches the doctrine of salvation. It teaches the principle of sanctification, and Christ centred theology which a significant aspect of several modern evangelical denominations.

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