Chapter III

The Personal Traits in Herbert's Poetry

No serious student of Herbert's poetry would fail to discover in it glimpses of his vibrant personality. It is so deeply personal that the man and his attributes shine forth from almost every line of his poems. The personal traits of his personality which can be seen distinctly in his poetry are (a) deep spiritual faith, (b) rare sensibility, (c) intensity of feeling, (d) buoyant hope, (e) noble humility, and (f) sincerity of depiction. These will be discussed at some length in this chapter.

(a) Deep Spiritual Faith

The regular prayers of his family as well as his own prayerful habit of mind which developed in his early childhood, combined to foster in young Herbert a deep faith in God and a strong love for the Church. The worship and the rituals at the Westminster Abbey, and its magnificent music, had become a part of Herbert's life in his school-days, and the Abbey itself, with its soaring arches, and its beautiful altar, richly decorated with blue velvet and gold, appeared to him as an impressive symbol of the Church of England. He accepted the religion of his inheritance with love and gladness. His early enchantment with the
regalia of the Church left an indelible imprint upon his mind. It was this attraction, perhaps, which prompted him to write these lines:

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

('Affliction I', 1-6)

It would not be incorrect to say that George Herbert started his worship of the Lord with complete ease and innocent joy of boyhood. It has already been noticed that his deep faith in God and genuine love for the Church continued till the end of his life, despite several setbacks and worldly disappointments. Even his almost constant ill health did not deter him from the path of private and public devotions which he had chalked out for himself. The failures and disappointments of life only heightened, and in no manner lessened, Herbert's devotion to the Lord and His Church.

The anguish felt by Herbert before he found peace as a priest of a country parish, is perhaps best described by his impassioned plea to God as reflected in his poem 'Home', to rescue him from his mortal condition. It is repeated with varying degrees of intensity throughout the poem. In the eleventh stanza, Herbert pleads thus:

Oh loose this frame, this knot of man untie
That my free soul may use her wing,
Which now is pinion'd with mortalitie,
As an intangled, hamper'd thing.
O show thy self to me,
Or take me up to thee.

(61-65)
It is only in the last stanza that the poet achieves some peace, when he pretends to abandon the rhyme-scheme that he had adopted in the early part of the poem:

Come dearest Lord, passe not this holy season,  
My flesh and bones and joynts do pray:  
And ev'n my verse, when by the rhyme and reason  
The word is, 'Stay', sayes ever, 'Come'  
O show thy self to me,  
Or take me upto thee.

(73-77)

As is obvious, the poet should have used the word 'stay' to maintain the poetic form of the stanza. But he purposely uses the word 'come', perhaps to achieve a greater harmony to assert the truthfulness of his feelings, as this word rhymes with the title of the poem. When Herbert says that his flesh, bones and even his joints are praying to God, we can feel the depth and earnestness of his prayer, and the intensity of his yearning for the Lord. The poet achieves a rare effect when he shows that his verse also joins in with the physical members in a firm resolve to please God.

The range of Herbert's conception of God is indeed wide. He has depicted the wrath of God, the justice of God, and the power of God in many of his poems. But also expressed with equal depth of feeling are the wonders of God, the compassion of God, the closeness of God to himself, and, most of all, the love and tenderness of God towards his erring children. Speaking generally, a deep desire to merge with the Godhead was the mainspring of the religious spirit in the seventeenth century, but Herbert's divine yearning was far deeper in that he recognised the immanence
of God in himself and in all the world around him. Compare, for instance, the following lines:

Thou art in small things great, not small in any: 
Thy even praise can neither rise, not fall. 
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many: 
For thou art infinite in one and all.

('Providence', 41-44)

Herbert can also see and appreciate the all-encompassing power of the Lord:

Tempests are calm to thee; they know thy hand, 
And hold it fast, as children do their fathers, 
Which crie and follow. Thou hast made poore sand 
Check the proud sea, ev'n when it swells and gathers.

(ibid., 45-48)

Herbert has realised that man's powers are too inadequate to describe the qualities of the Lord fully:

My God, Man cannot praise thy name: 
Thou art all brightnesse, perfect puritie;

('Miserie', 31-32)

He sees God as brightness, loveliness, and beauty, and describes his feelings very intimately and succinctly:

Thou art my lovelinesse, my life, my light, 
Beautie alone to me.

('Dulnesse', 9-10)

His deep faith in the eternal 'sweet God' is evident in the following lines:

Lord, though we change, thou art the same; 
The same sweet God of love and light;

('Whitsunday', 25-26)

Giving an impressive analysis of the harmony of the relationship between God and man, Herbert writes:
Whether I flie with angels, fall with dust,
Thy hands made both, and I am there;
Thy power and love, my love and trust
Make one place ev'ry where.

('The Temper I', 25-28)

While Herbert is aware of God as beauty, light and love, and expresses his devotion to His power and mercy, he is also aware of the protection that is earned for man by such devotion:

what open forsp, or hidden CHARM
Can blast my fruit, or bring me HAR'1,
While the inclosure is thine AR'M?

('Paradise', 4-6)

God's relationship with man is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Herbert's poetry. He delineates God's love for man in a number of ways. It is because of this love that God sent His only begotten son to save man from perdition. Writing about God's fondness for a pure human heart, Herbert says:

My God, what is a heart,
That thou shouldst it so eye, and wooe,
Powring upon it all thy art
As if thou hadst nothing els to do?

('Mattens', 9-12)

The Lord's yearning for man and His concern for man are depicted by Herbert in the closing lines of 'The Pulley':

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep him with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet weariness
May tosse him to my breast.

(16-20)

Describing the unconditional and unlimited compassion of
the Lord for unworthy man, Herbert writes:

And as of old the Law by heav'ny art
Was writ in stone; so thou, which also art
The letter of the word, find'st no fit heart
To hold thee.

Yet do we still persist as we began,
And so should perish, but nothing can,
Though it be cold, hard, foul, from loving man
Withhold thee.

('Sepulchre', 17-24)

Herbert's realisation of the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of God by which He knows and rules everything from the smallest ant to the mightiest of civilizations, led him to write his famous prophetic poem, 'The Church Militant'. In this poem, Herbert traces the predestined course of the Church, which is shown to follow the Sun in a Westerly direction. According to the narrative, the arrival of the awareness of Christianity is always preceded by mighty empires and the spectacular development of the arts. But sin and degeneration doggedly follow the Church. The poet projects the idea that this trail would end only at the point of its origin, when the final judgement shall be delivered by the Lord.

Herbert's personal relationship with God, as portrayed in his poetry, is very intimate. He wished not merely to know God but to know Him at once 'here and now', in a spirit of intimacy in which the bounds of time and space, i.e. those between 'here' and 'there' and 'then' and 'now', disappear. The intimacy of this relationship, wherein he calls God his grief as well as his delight, is depicted in these lines:

Thou art my grief alone,
Thou Lord conceal it not: and as thou art
All my delight, so all my smart:

('Affliction II', 11-13)
His rare closeness to God, rather than a Christian's awe of God, has been clearly expressed many times in his poetry as when he says:

I cannot ope mine eyes,
But thou art ready there to catch
My morning - soul and sacrifice:

('Mattens', 1-3)

In many of Herbert's lines, there is an unmistakable note of intense mystic longing as in these:

Behold, thy dust doth stirre,
It moves, it creepes, it aims at thee:
Wilt thou deferre
To succour me,
Thy pile of dust, wherein each crumme
Sayes, Come?

('Longing', 37-42)

Herbert's deep feeling for the love of God and his complete dependence on it is very appealingly brought out in the following lines:

My God, thou art all love.
Not one poore minute scapes thy breast,
But brings a favour from above;
And in this love, more than in bed, I rest.

('Even-song', 29-32)

The poet's desire for a total submission of his will to the Will of the Lord has often been very movingly uttered. The following passage offers an example:

O let thy sacred will
All thy delight in me fulfill
Let me not think an action mine own way,
But as thy love shall sway,
Resigning up the rudder to thy skill.

('Obedience', 16-20)
Herbert wishes that God would imprint His image upon his heart, but he despairs to realise that it is too hard for the Lord to set his foot upon. Nevertheless, the poet hopes that the Lord, Who is an ocean of compassion, would restore His image in the poet's heart as easily as He had written, on stone perhaps, the Ten Commandments for Moses:

Yet Lord restore thine image, heare my call:
And though my hard heart scarce to thee can groane,
Remember that thou once didst write in stone.

('The Sinner', 12-14)

Alluding further to the scripture, Herbert writes a deeply moving appeal which expresses extreme agony, but at the same time gives us glimpses of rare forbearance and surrender:

Ah my deare Father, ease my smart
These contraries crush me;these crosse actions
Doe winde a rope about, and cut my heart:
And yet since these thy contradictions
Are properly a cross felt by thy Sonne,
With these foure words, my words, 'Thy will be done'.

('The Crosse', 31-36)

An important point is brought out by J.H.Summers when he states that there were also moments of paralysing doubt in Herbert's mind but they were very rare. He draws our attention to a poem, entitled 'Perseverence', in which Herbert openly expressed doubt; but he did not include it in 'The Temple', perhaps because he did not believe that it would "turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul" as is clear from the following lines:

But what shall issue, whither these words
Shal help another, but my judgement bee,
As a burst fouling-peece doth save the birds
But kill the man, is seald with thee.

('Perseverence', 5-8)
In some poems we get glimpses of Herbert's perseverance in prayer which is so ardent that he humbly believes that the Lord will not remain unaffected by it, but would have to condescend to grant him a heart soaked in His praise:

 Wherfore I cry, and cry again;  
 And in no quiet canst thou be,  
 Till I a thankfull heart obtain  
 Of thee:  
 Not thankful, when it pleaseth me;  
 As if thy blessings had spare dayes  
 But such a heart, whose pulse may be  
 Thy praise.  

 ('Gratefulnesse', 25-32)

Herbert's praise of God touches a new height when he thinks of Him as a master architect, capable of founding faith in a heart as weak as his:

 Blest be the Architect, whose art  
 Could build so strong in a weak heart.  

 ('The Church-floore', 19-20)

Helen C. White has pointed out that even though the inner conflict of George Herbert was very deep and prolonged, there was one fundamental issue on account of which, unlike John Donne, for instance, he never suffered any qualms of conscience, and that was the issue of his allegiance to the church of his inheritance. Neither in his life nor in his writings is there anything to suggest that he ever was of a divided mind as to which was the right Church, in the service of which, he believed, lay his salvation. From an early age, Herbert had firm faith in the forms and practices of the Church of England. In this matter, he began at a point which Donne had reached only after many painful years of indecision. It can thus be seen that religious controversies
as such did not carry much weight with Herbert as they did with
Donne. Margaret Bottrall, too, has pointed out that unlike Donne,
who never felt at ease in the Church of his adoption, Herbert was
a natural believer, and his mind never rebelled against the voca-
tion of a priest.  

Herbert's deep love and respect for the Church of England
can be clearly seen in the following lines from his poem called
'The British Church':

I joy, deare Mother, when I view
Thy perfect lineaments and hue
Both sweet and bright.
Beautie in thee takes up her place,
And dates her letters from thy face,
When she doth write.

(1-6)

After describing the pitfalls of Roman Catholicism and
Genevan Calvinism, Herbert eulogises the golden middle path of
the Church of England in the following manner:

But, dearest Mother, what those misse,
The mean, thy praise and glorie is,
And long may be.
Blessed be God, whose love it was
To double-moat thee with his grace,
And none but thee.

(ibid., 25-30)

It has been clearly established that there is a medieval
quality in Herbert's faith in God and the Church that is reflected
in his poetry. His whole-hearted acceptance of the Church's teach-
ings about God's Providence, Man's sin, and Christ's redemptive
action, gives him a steady vantage point from which to contemplate
both the world around him and his own inner conflicts. It also
determined the nature of that contemplation which was not free,
visionary, and prophetic, but individually interpretative.

About the efficacy of such faith and its redemptive power, Herbert says:

That which before was darkened clean
With bushie groves, pricking the lookers eie,
Vanisht away, when Faith did change the scene:
And then appear'd a glorious skie.

What though my bodie runne to dust?
Faith cleaves unto it, counting ev'ry grain
With an exact and most particular trust,
Reserving all for flesh again.

('Faith', 37-44)

Herbert has made a fervent appeal to God to grant him such elevating faith as would enable him to 'rest' with Him:

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charitie;
That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.

('Trinitie Sunday', 7-9)

Rev. F. E. Hutchinson has pointed out that next to God, Herbert loved most the Word of God - The Bible. He was known to have said that he would not part with one single leaf of the Bible even in exchange of all the world. (This may remind the reader of Carlyle's avowed preference for Shakespeare over the Indian empire if a choice was to be made.) A very warm and heartfelt tribute is paid to 'The Bible' by Herbert in the following lines:

Oh Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart
Suck every letter, and a honie gain,
Precious for any grief in any part;
To cleare the breast, to mollify all pain.
Thou art all health, health thriving till it make
A full eternitie; thou art a masse
Of strange delights, where we may wish & take.

('The H. Scriptures I', 1-7)
Paying yet another warm tribute to the Testament, Herbert describes the effect its words have on him, and compares the biblical sayings to stars as he finds them bright with meaning, and capable of imparting heavenly joy:

Thy words do find me out, & parallels bring,
And in another make me understood.
Starres are poore books, & of tentimes do misse:
This book of starres lights to eternal bliss.

('The H.Scriptures II', 11-14)

(b) Rare Sensibility

Herbert had a quick and definite sensibility which, like a highly sensitive film, absorbed impressions and significations of events and situations of all hues, both in life and legend, including even those which might appear to be rather immaterial. It finds its expression in poetry in a rarefied form. The devout outpourings of the poet’s heart often gained intensely on their poetic appeal by their unification with such sensibility. It is because of this unique sensibility that Herbert responded to various stimuli in the manner he did. The appeal of his poetry owes chiefly to his sensibility. No generalised system of theology, but deeply felt experience, formed the basis of Herbert’s poetry.

According to C.A. Patrides, the eucharist is the marrow of Herbert’s sensibility. Far more important than baptism, the only other sacrament recognised by the Protestants, it had elicited, ever since the Reformation, violent disagreements as to the precise nature of Christ’s ‘presence’ during its celebration.
While Calvinists claimed that Christ was present solely in the
communicant's faith, the Roman Catholics asserted that he was
present "not only in fayth, but also in the mouth, to the tongue,
to the lips, to the flesh, to the bowels of all communicants"
(Sylvester Norris). Eschewing both the extremes, the Anglicans
proclaimed that "the Body and Blood of Christ are really and
actually present, but in a way which human mind cannot understand
and much more beyond the power of man to express" (William Forbes).
Herbert agreed with the Anglican interpretation, but only after
he had exorcized the partisan zeal he had displayed in the tirade
against Melville. Herbert's poetry is replete with eucharistic
symbols like the altar, the table, the banquet, the feast, bread,
meat and wine, and, specially, blood. The verbs 'taste' and 'eat'
occur quite frequently in his poems, as in the last two lines of
his famous poem 'Love III':

You must sit down, sayses Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

('Love III', 17-18)

Patrides adds that 'The Temple' is an eucharistic structure.
In fact, in form and content, it is itself an 'eucharist' or
'thanksgiving'.

From the point of view of sensibility, the poem, 'The
Sacrifice', is full of significance. Prof. Rosemond Tuve consi-
ders it to be full of minute shocks, of unexpected connections,
and sudden emotional recoils. Its tone and temper, coupled with
ironic contrasts, brings about some shocks and revulsions. Christ
in this poem is not the One we know from Luke's or Matthew's
straightforward narratives, but a sensitive divine being who laments man's insensibility and neglect. Unforwarned, we are struck by shocking elements of pictorial clarity. The overall sensitivity of the poem springs from the vibrant sensibility of Herbert's mind. 6

The plaintive call of Christ, who is pained to see that none of the passers-by has eyes for him while he 'took eyes', and, in fact, assumed a human form for finding and curing them, is conveyed by these lines:

'O H all ye, who passe by', whose eyes and mende
To worldly things are sharp, but to me blinde;
To me, who took eyes that I might you find:
Was ever grief like mine?

( 'The Sacrifice', 1-4)

According to the Gospel of St. John (XII 3-5), after Mary had anointed Christ's feet with an expensive ointment, Judas complained: "Why was not the ointment sold for three hundred pence?" Only the sensibility of Herbert could discover its inherent irony and put words in Christ's mouth, as if, ironically again, to fix a value on his sacrifice in terms of the bribe as accepted by Judas for betraying Him:

For thirtie pence he did my death devise,
Who at three hundred did the ointment prize,
Not half so sweet as my sweet sacrifice:
Was ever grief like mine?

( ibid., 17-20)

Herbert has shown that Christ has grieved not about his own suffering and humiliation, but about man's ignorance and disregard of the very springs of life:
Then they condemn me all with that same breath,
Which I do give them daily, unto death.
Thus 'Adam' my first breathing rendereth:
Was ever grief like mine?

(ibid., 69-72)

Herbert's acute sensibility has grasped the irony of the sad reversal of the situation as depicted in these lines:

> Herod in judgment sits, while I do stand;
> Examines me with a censorious hand:
> I him obey, who all things else command:
> Was ever grief like mine?

(ibid., 81-84)

Herbert is keenly sensitive to the pain that Christ felt at each lash of the whip that fell upon his person:

> Ah! how they scourge me, yet my tendernesse
> Doubles each lash: and yet their bitterness
> Winds up my grief to a mysteriousnesse:
> Was ever grief like mine?

(ibid., 125-129)

The poet has felt in his heart the power of the forgiving compassion shown by Christ to his ignorant followers who slept while his body was being crucified:

> 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?

(ibid., 149-152)

Another instance of Christ's glorious compassion that has impressed the sensitive soul of the poet, is presented in the following lines which relate how, even after being hit on the head, the Saviour, far from withdrawing his benediction from his adversaries, continued to pour it all the more upon them:
Then with the reed they gave to me before,  
They strike my head, the rock from whence all store  
Of heavenly blessings issue evermore:  
Was ever grief like mine?  

(ibid., 169-172)

The godly soul of Herbert was smarting under acute agony  
and shame at the ingratitude shown to him who came only to  
redeem mankind from sin and death:  

Betwixt two thees I spend my utmost breath,  
As he for some robberie suffereth.  
Alas! what have I stollen from you? Death.  
Was ever grief like mine?  

(ibid., 229-232)

Herbert laments over man's ignorance and foolhardiness, as  
well as his stubbornness, in treading the wrong path:  

Lord, let the Angels praise thy name.  
Man is a foolish thing, a foolish thing,  
Folly and Sinne play all his game.  
His house still burns, and yet he still doth sing,  
Man is but grasse,  
He knows it, fill the glasse.  

('Miserie', 1-6)

The following lines convey the poignant grief of the poet  
at man's callous indifference to his Saviour whose body is now  
lying neglected in a sepulchre:  

0 Blessed bodie! Whither art thou thrown?  
No lodging for thee, but a cold hard stone?  
So many hearts on earth, and yet not one  
Receive thee?  

('Sepulchre', 1-4)

Herbert's unerring sensibility is evident also in another  
of his poems, called 'Good Friday', where he calls upon God to  
write His message of sorrow in his heart, where ink, in the form  
of blood, and sin co-exist:
Since bloud is fittest, Lord, to write
Thy sorrows in, and bloudie fight,
My heart hath store, write there, where in
One box doth lie both ink and sinne:

('Good Friday', 21-24)

Herbert sees the distinct possibility of sin running away from his heart when the story of the Lord is inscribed there:

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

(ibid., 25-29)

Once sin leaves his heart, the poet requests God to keep it ever filled with His presence so that sin does not have the courage to return:

Sinne being gone, oh fill the place,
And keep possession with thy grace;
Lest sinne take courage and return,
And all the writings blot or burn.

(ibid., 29-32)

In 'Easter' (7-12) the poet eagerly entreats his lute to discharge its old debt, for it should remember that the wood of Christ's cross taught all wood to resound his name just as the stretched sinews of His body at the cross taught all stringed instruments to be properly tuned. This conception of our obligation to Him, who sacrificed His life to save us, can take shape only in a poet of rare sensibility like Herbert.

Herbert tells us that he sent a painful sigh to seek out God, but it returned disappointed:

I sent a sigh to seek thee out,
Deep drawn in pain,
Wing'd like an arrow: but my scout
Returns in vain.

('The Search', 16-20)
This passage is an indirect affirmation of gladness and hope, for despair as a means of seeking the Lord has been rejected as useless.

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 Imagining the vastness of God's space, troubled Herbert feels that his grief must be as limitless to reduce the agonising distance from Him, thus confirming the popular belief that a long spell of pain and endurance is inevitable to one who would realise God in his heart:

Since then my grief must be as large,
    As is thy space,
    Thy distance from me; see my charge,
    Lord, see my case.

(ibid., 45-48)
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Not to agony alone did Herbert's sensibility react. To moments of joy and ecstasy, too, his response was deep and sincere. An instance is provided by the following lines where the poet has expressed his happy awareness of his closeness to God:

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My joy, my life, my crown
My heart was meaning all day long,
    Somewhat it fain would say.
And still it runneth muttering up and down
With only this, 'My joy, my life, my crown'.

(A true Hymn, 1-5)
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The image of the poet's heart running about while muttering the joyful line in ecstatic abandon is indeed very pleasing. The poet in George Herbert is quite aware of the effectiveness of the above lines, for he has stated that the refrain is good poetry because it has sprung from experience felt in the depths of his being:
Yet slight not these few words:
If truly said, they may take place
Among the best in art.
The fineness which a hymne or a psalm affords,
Is, when the soul unto the words accords.

(ibid., 6-10)

There is yet another example to show how the poet's sensibility gets easily quickened by his subtle awareness of the Lord. The two words, 'My Master', in the following passage, bring him 'a sweet savour of Christ', and instantly soak his mind and being in their nectarine bliss:

How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound! 'My Master'
As ember-greese leaves a rich sent
Unto the taster:
So do these words a sweet content,
An orientall fragrancie, 'My Master'.
With these all day I do perfume my mind,
My mind ev'n thrust into them both:
That I might find
What cordials make this curious broth,
This broth of smells, that feeds and fats my minde.

(‘The Odour. 2. Cor. 2-15’, 1-10)

In 'Whitsunday', while addressing God as 'sweet Dove', Herbert imagines the divine bird to be spreading its wings in his heart and hatching it as an unfertilised egg till it also sprouts wings and can fly away with the Lord. This, in essence, is total surrender. This tender thought and its beautiful expressions mark the delicate sensibility with which the poet was blessed. The lines are quoted:

Listen sweet Dove unto my song,
And spread thy golden wings in me;
Hatching my tender heart so long,
Till it get wing, and flie away with thee.

(1-4)
Herbert's heart and mind was so deeply imbued with the thought of Jesus that even when he conceived of sorrow as breaking his heart, each broken piece was shown as bearing a mark of the Saviour. This is admirably illustrated in the poem, 'Jesu', reproduced below:

**JESU is in my heart, his sacred name**  
Is deeply carved there; but th' other week  
A great affliction broke the little frame,  
Ev'n all to pieces; which I went to seek:  
And first I found the corner, where was J,  
After, where ES, and next where U was graved.  
When I had got these parcels, instantly  
I sat down to spell them, and perceived  
That to my broken heart he was 'I ease you',  
And to my whole is JESU.

(The letter J was almost identical with the letter I in seventeenth century calligraphy.)

It must be admitted by any reader that never before was such a deep impression of Christ so movingly conveyed in English poetry.

(c) **Intensity of Feeling**

An aspect of Herbert's personality that emerges clearly from his poetry is the intensity of his feeling. His total submission to the Lord notwithstanding, some of his disappointments in life and his almost constant ill health produced very intense feelings in him, and he expressed them with power in his poetry. To us they are valuable primarily as a record of his inner conflicts, and that is what actually constitutes his poetry.

While suffering from sickness and agony, Herbert compares himself to a shortlived flower, and earnestly prays to God to treat him gently, even though he admits that his suffering is the result of his sins. This appeal is presented with deep feeling in the
following lines:

Lord, I confess my sinne is great;
Great is my sinne. Oh gently treat
With thy quick flow'r, thy momentarie bloom;
Whose life still pressing
Is one undressing,
A steady aiming at a tomb.

('Repentance', 1-6)

Herbert's fear that he will be of no use to anybody because of his sickness, finds its expression in an appeal to God not to let him perish like a flower, but to put his life to some use:

If as a flowre doth spread and die,
Thou wouldst extend me to some good,
Before I were by frosts extremitie
Nipt in the bud;

('Employment I', 1-4)

Herbert was looking for a suitable employment for himself for the most part of his life before he took holy orders. His anguish at remaining unemployed has been expressed with intense feeling in many poems. An instance is found in these lines:

All things are busie; onely I
Neither bring honey with the bees,
Nor flowres to make that, nor the husbandrie
To water these.

(ibid., 17-20)

At times the poet was deeply troubled by the overpowering thought of death and sin which, he felt, was responsible for making his life unbearable. During these moments of pain, he turns to God, his only hope, for grace and succour:

Death is working like a mole,
And digs my grave at each remove:
Let grace work too, and on my soul
Drop from above.
Sinne is still hammering my heart
Unto a hardness, void of love:
Let suppling grace, to crosse his art,
Drop from above.

('Grace', 13-20)
Now and then the poet is seen humbly atoning for any use of thoughtless words in his supplications to the Lord. An example is seen in these lines:

\[
\text{Sorrie I am, my God, sorrie I am,} \\
\text{That my offences course it in a ring,} \\
\text{My thoughts are working like a busy flame,} \\
\text{Until their cockatrice they hatch and bring:} \\
\text{And when they once have perfected their draughts,} \\
\text{My words take fire from my inflamed thoughts.}
\]

('Sinnes round', 1-6)

In the above lines, the title, 'Sinnes round', seems to suggest a continuous ring of sin. The 'offences' coursing the 'round' 'in a ring' perhaps indicates the continued deviation of the poet's mind from the path of virtue and humility. The reference to the 'cockatrice', a legendary monster with deadly glance, hatched by a reptile from a cock's egg on a dunghill, also has its serious import in that it hints at the birth of 'inflamed thoughts' which, the poet has realised, are fatal to himself. Thus, the poem is a brief record of the poet's repentant realisation of the wickedness of his own wilful thought.

The poignant longing that the poet feels for God is expressed with soul-stirring appeal in the following lines:

\[
\text{With sick and famisht eyes,} \\
\text{With doubling knees and weary bones,} \\
\text{To thee my cries,} \\
\text{To thee my groans,} \\
\text{To thee my sighs, my tears ascend:} \\
\text{No end?}
\]

('Longing', 1-6)

The juxtaposition of the hoarseness of a overwrought throat and the weariness of a soul, helps to intensify the poet's feeling. Further, the comparison of his heart to a plot of land, withered
and accused, creates deep pathos:

My throat, my soul is hoarse,
My heart is wither'd like a ground
Which thou dost curse,
My thoughts turn round,
And make me giddie; Lord, I fall,
Yet call.

(ibid., 7-12)

The moving simplicity of the expression, "Lord, I fall", is indeed irresistible. It has in it that closeness and cordiality of easy relationship that is truly expressive of a child's nearness to the mother.

Badly beaten by sickness, and greatly depressed, because he has not been able to realise God unto himself, the poet bewails his lot in deep anguish:

One ague dwellleth in my bones,
Another in my soul (the memorie
What I could do for thee, if once my grones
Could be allowed for harmonie):
I am in all a weak disabled thing.

('The Crosse', 13-17)

The ague in his soul is almost identical with the 'wither'd ... ground' as expressed in the poem, 'Longing', and represents the spiritual sterility of the poet's mind. Shorn of their subsistence on deep feeling, such turns of expression are characteristically of our day.

Unable to bear the intensity of his agony, the poet breaks out in the following lines which are perhaps the most poignant in his poetry:
My thoughts are all a case of knives
Wounding my heart
With scatter'd smart,
As watering pots give flowers their lives
Nothing their furie can controll,
While they do wound and pink my soul.

('Affliction IV', 7-12)

In the following lines, the poet is seen weeping over God's neglect of him in spite of the sincerity of his prayer:

O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
To cri[e to thee,
And then not heare it crying! all day long
My heart was in my knee,
But no hearing.

('Deniall', 16-20)

A plaintive cry, wrenched out of the poet's soul, is addres-
sed to the Lord to have pity on him and not to hold back His redeeming grace:

Broken in pieces all asunder,
Lord, hunt me not,
A thing forgot,
Once a poor creature, now a wonder.
A wonder tortured in the space
Betwixt this world and that of grace.

('Affliction IV', 1-6)

Overcome by his afflictions, the poet appeals most fervently to God to help him in the same manner as the sun dissolves the darkness of night:

Oh help, my God! Let not their plot
Kill them and me,
And also thee,
Who art my life: dissolve the knot,
As the sunne scatters by his light
All the rebellions of the night.

(ibid., 19-20)

The verses, 'And also thee, / Who art my life', convey a sense
of the poet's closeness to God.

The following passage expresses in a most telling manner the height of the poet's agony:

0 do not blinde me!
I have deserv'd than an Egyptian night
Should thicken all my powers; because my lust
Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy delight:
But I am frailtie, and already dust;
0 do not grinde me!

('Sighs and Groans', 13-18)

He has addressed another heart-rending appeal to the Lord for acceptance and grace:

But 0 reprieve me!
For thou hast life and death at thy command;
Thou art both Judge and Saviour, feast and rod,
Cordiall and Corrosive; put not thy hand
Into the bitter box; but 0 my God,
My God, relieve me!

(ibid., 25-30)

'0 my God, My God' is another instance of the poet's sense of closeness to God.

In the following lines, Herbert paints a verbal picture of his soul clinging desperately to God. Who, to the acutely afflicted mind of the poet, appears like a massive statue of stone:

Only my soule hangs on thy promises
With face and hands clinging unto thy brest,
Clinging and crying, crying without cease,
Thou art my rock, thou art my rest.

('Perseverence', 13-16)

The image is that of a child chastised by its mother, yet clinging to her, for she alone can offer the love that has no substitute. In quite a few of Herbert's poems delineating his love for the Lord, the mother and child relationship can be easily recognized.
The persistence of his anguished feelings, and the sheer force of an appeal born out of them, have been exquisitely expressed by the poet in the following lines:

A throbbing conscience, spurred by remorse
Hath a strange force:
It quits the earth, and mounting more and more
Dares to assault thee, and besiege thy doore.
There it stands knocking, to thy musick's wrong,
And drowns the song.
Glorie and honour are set by, till it
An answer get.

('The Storm', 9-16)

The poet is afraid that because of his inherent sin, God may not pay heed to his prayers. So he has appealed to Him to bless him for the sake of the blood of his Saviour. This soulful entreaty is clearly indicative of the poet's intense desire for God's mercy:

Yet heare, O God, onely for his blouds sake
Which pleads for me:
For though sinnes plead too, yet like stones they make
His blouds sweet current much more loud to be.

('Church-lock and key', 9-12)

Thinking reverentially of Christ, the poet requests God to give him also a chance to offer his tribute to the Saviour, as the other blessed ones were given:

Get me a standing there, and place
Among the beams, which crown the face
Of him, who dy'd to part
Sinne and my heart:
That among the rest I may
Glitter and curie, and winde as they:
That winding is their fashion
Of adoration.

('The Starre', 21-28)

An entreaty, pure and simple, and marked by a deep feeling of love for the Lord, has been presented in these lines with
singular effect:

My love, my sweetnesse, heare
By these thy feet, at which my heart
Lies all the yeare,
Pluck out thy dart,
And heal my troubled breast which cryes,
Which dyes.

('Longing', 79-84)

The poet is alarmed at the sight of the first streaks of the grey in his hair, for he takes them as the sure sign of old age that brings mental and physical decay. But he regains his composure at the thought of the Lord:

The harbingers are come. See, see their mark;
White is their colour, and behold my head.
But must they have my brain? must they dispark
Those sparkling notions, which therein were bred?
'Must dulnesse turn me to a clod?'
Yet they have left me, 'Thou art still my God'.

('The Forerunners', 1-6)

Herbert's poems depict not only his agony, or his deep feeling when he is desperately trying to get at God, but also his moments of peace and reconciliation which, too, are expressed with equal verve and felicity. The following lines from his famous poem, 'The Flower', provide an instance in point:

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live to write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: 0 my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

(36-42)

Margaret Bottrall has considered these lines to be most typical of Herbert.7
Although most of Herbert’s English poetry is primarily a record of his deep spiritual conflicts which brought him immense pain and agony, yet hope was not alien to it, and we often find a joyful spirit permeating his verses. As a result of some of the setbacks in the early years of his life, one finds now and then a sense of unrest and futility in Herbert’s poetry. But that is more apparent than real, a shadow on the surface merely, for, deep down, there is a firm foundation of hope and faith. Helen C. White has rightly pointed out that even in the most disheartened of Herbert’s poems, there is a steady reassurance of the soothing presence of his God at the end. If he falters in the face of grief or misery, it is for the moment only. Here is an example:

O what a deadly cold
Doth me infold
I half believe,
That Sinne saies true: but while I grieve,
Thou com’st and dost relieve.

('A Parodie', 26-30)

Often, a single verse is just sufficient to convey this confidence of the poet, as here:

We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more.

('Affliction V', 20)

Herbert’s unwavering faith in Providence is much more than a safeguard against temptation and sin; it is the very sheet-anchor of the poet’s religious consciousness, and the source of a peculiar power in his poetry. Some critics find it significant that each of the most poignant poems in 'The Temple' is invariably followed by a poem of affirmation and hope. It cannot be mere
chance that the opening lines of 'The Bag' ('Away despair! my gracious Lord doth heave."") should follow the heartbroken plaints of 'Longing', or that 'The Crosse' should be counter-balanced by 'The Flower' with its exultant opening ('How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean / Are thy returns! "). It can be easily seen that if Herbert was at times tempted to indulge in an excess of melancholy, his sober grasp of a situation soon asserted itself, and he regained his composure. The poet felt that God's ways might be past average human understanding, but that His wisdom rules all should be plain to all. It was thanks to this belief that he could say:

Thy will such a strange distance is,
As that to it
East and West touch, the poles do kisse,
And parallels meet.

('The Search', 41-44)

All through 'The Search', Herbert has lamented his utter alienation from God, yet he has concluded the poem with this confident assertion:

For as thy absence doth excell
All distance known,
So doth thy nearnesse bear the bell,
Making two one.

(ibid., 57-60)

Even in his famous poem, 'The Collar', which bears evidence of the poet's rebellion against God's designs to keep him fettered, there is one stanza where his bright hope sparkles:

No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
All wasted?
Not so, my heart: but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh blown age.

(14-19)
Herbert counsels high aspiration and modest ways to contain despair. This is admirably put forward in these lines:

Pitch thy behaviour low, thy projects high;
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be,
Sink not in spirit: who aimeth at the sky,
Shoots higher much then he that means a tree.

("The Church-porch", 331-334)

In the following lines, the poet presents a poignant appeal to God to give him health and to remove the ill winds that trouble him:

Sweeten at length this bitter bowl,
Which thou has pour'd into my soul;
Thy wormwood turn to health, windes to fair weather;
For if thou stay,
I and this day,
As we did rise, we die together.

("Repentance", 19-24)

Having recourse to two biblical allusions, and borrowing Shakespeare's homily of fractures well cured being eventually stronger ("Henry IV"), Herbert has put forward his hope in God's mercy in these lines:

But thou wilt sinne and grief destroy;
That so the broken bones may joy
And tune together in a well-set song,
Full of his praises,
Who dead men raises.
Fractures well cur'd make us more strong.

(ibid., 31-36)

Herbert is able to detect a glimmer of hope in the "stretching and contracting" to which his soul is being subjected by God, albeit for his own good:

Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter:
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the music better.

("The Temper I", 21-24)
The poet believes that if the forces which cause him grief and pain are subjected to God's Will, they will finally prove to be of real value to him:

Then shall those powers, which work for grief,
   Enter thy pay,
   And day by day
Labour thy praise, and my relief;
With care and courage building me,
Till I reach heav'n and much more, thee.

('Affliction IV', 25-30)

Asking himself not to invite pain by anticipating grief, and assuring himself that it will be short-lived even if it comes, Herbert expresses hope and faith in divine providence in these lines:

Either grief will not come: or if it must,
   Do not forecast.
   And while it cometh, it is almost past.
   Away distrust:
   My God hath promis'd; he is just.

('The Discharge', 51-55)

In a group of beautiful verses, Herbert coaxes his drooping heart to have faith, for the Lord is sure to come and bestow mirth and happiness upon it:

Awake sad heart, whom sorrow ever drowns;
Take up thine eyes, which feed on earth;
Unfold thy forehead gather'd into frowns:
Thy Saviour comes, and with him mirth:

('The Dawning', 1-4)

The poet has tried to keep distrust and despair at bay by convincing himself that all that troubles him will be tackled by the Almighty, for He is all compassion:
Away despair! my gracious Lord doth heare. 
Though windes and waves assault my keel, 
He doth preserve it : he doth steer, 
Ev'n when the boat seems most to reel. 
Storms are the triumph of his art : 
Well may be close his eyes, but not his heart. 

(The Bag', 1-6)

Herbert implores his heart to keep close company of the 
Saviour who has risen to take him out of the mire of mortality:
Rise heart ; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise 
Without delays, 
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise 
With him mayst rise : 
That, as his death calcined thee to dust, 
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just. 

('Easter', 1-6)

The poet pays a moving tribute to God with a garland of hopeful verse in the following manner:
Lord, thou didst make me, yet thou woundest me;
Lord, thou wound me, yet thou dost relieve me;
Lord, thou relievest, yet I die by thee:
Lord, thou dost kill me, yet thou dost reprieve me.

('Justice I', 2-5)

A moment of rare expansion is revealed by Herbert when he expresses the view that in God's scheme of things, there is not suffering alone in store for man, but there are many things besides, particularly in the world of Nature, which can comfort him a great deal, only if he has eyes to see:

More servants wait on Man, 
Then he'll take notice of ; in ev'ry path 
He treads down that which doth befriend him, 
When sickness makes him pale and wan 
O mightie love! Man is one world, and hath 
Another to attend him. 

('Man', 43-48)
This also is an indirect acknowledgement of God's bounty and compassion for man.

(e) Noble Humility

A spirit of noble humility is another quality that distinguishes Herbert's poetry. Notwithstanding his own awareness of the powers of his mind and the depth and range of his poetry, Herbert was a humble man at heart and always showed himself as such in his life and work.

Commenting on this aspect of Herbert's personality, Marchette Chute has pointed out that the manuscript of poems that was sent by the poet about the time of his death to Ferrar, was not a jumble but a collection compiled with the same neatness and care as had gone into the making of each individual poem in it. His request to his friend to dispose of the same in any manner he thought fit, even to consign it to the flames if, in his wisdom, he considered it to be of little help to the reader in his own spiritual struggle, has been taken as an act of renunciation of his pride, for Herbert was too humble to think that his experience of spiritual conflicts and the surrender of his will to the Lord, as recorded in his poems, would swell the mighty ocean of the glory and majesty of God.

Herbert prays to the Lord to make him meek and humble, and to teach him perfect obedience to the Divine Will. He seeks God's grace in subduing his pride in word and deed:
O let me still
Write thee great God, and me a childe:
Let me be soft and supple to thy will,
Small to myself, to others milde,
Behither ill.

('H.Baptism II', 1-5)

In the following poignant appeal, the poet implores God not to neglect him even though he is nothing more than humble dust:

Put me not to shame,
Because I am
Thy clay that weeps, thy dust that calls.

('Complaining', 3-5)

Quelling his desire to leave God and find solace somewhere else, Herbert implores his heart to be patient and bear its misfortunes bravely. At the same time, he prays to the Almighty to bless him with nothing short of whole-hearted love at all times:

Yet, though thou trouolest me, I must be meek;
In weanenesse must be stout.
Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.
Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

('Affliction I', 61-66)

The last two lines depict the poet's total dependence on God.

Emphasizing Herbert's humility, Margaret Bottrall has pointed out that the poet was humane in every sense of the word. This, she says, is evident from his letters and poems, and the anecdotes about him as recorded by Walton. His outlook, as reflected in 'The Country Parson', also bears it out. Although accustomed from childhood to polite society where the arts were practised and learning was honoured, Herbert felt equally at home among the simple people of his parish. He served the laity of his parish
Herbert's favourite expression for himself was "less than the least of God's mercies". This, perhaps, was an adaptation of a phrase used by Jacob on the bank of the river Jordan when, for fear of his brother Esau, he prays for God's help saying:

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan." (Genesis XXXII, 10)

Nicholas Ferrar has pointed out that Herbert had adopted this expression as his motto, and used it frequently to conclude any talk which tended to inflate his ego in any manner. It is interesting to note that this may be in keeping with a custom in the seventeenth century, according to which, poets and artists used befitting personal slogans, called 'posies', which were engraved on rings, written on pictures and window-frames, and were even engraved on fruit-trenchers by some.

Herbert wrote a poem called 'The Posie', in which he justified the use of his selected slogan which, he pointed out, might not be as fashionably witty as those used by others in his day. But he was quite satisfied with it as it aptly echoed his true humility:

Let wits contest,
And with their words and posies windows fill:
'Lesse than the least
Of all thy mercies' is my posie still.

(1-4)
(f) **Sincerity of Depiction**

Yet another trait to emerge clearly from Herbert's poetry, is the sincere depiction of his deep-felt experiences and emotions, and convictions. Herbert's poetry was more than merely aesthetic. The poet felt morally bound to shun insincerity, and he never invented or blew up his emotions just for the sake of writing good poetry. To Herbert, the creation of a poem meant perfect agreement of his heart and skill. In other words, he expressed, in a natural style, what he felt deeply in his heart. It is this essential honesty of presentation that enhances the appeal of his poetry in a great measure.

'The Church-porch', which is one of Herbert's most significant poems, besides being his longest, contains some fine examples of his rare sincerity of depiction.

To those who shirk going to church on account of the sermons which they find to be tedious, Herbert gives the assurance that though the substance of his verse may sound didactic, its manner will not fail to satisfy them:

> Hearken unto a Verser, who may chance
> Ryme thee to Good, and make a bait of pleasure.
> A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies,
> And turn delight into a sacrifice.

(3-6)

The poet has reproved all evil manners like drunkenness, falsehood, avarice, and miserliness by bringing out their ill effects in verses which are as lucid and charming as they are instructive. Consider, for instance, these passages:
(i) He that is drunken, may his mother kill
Bigge with his sister: he hath lost the reins,
Is outlawed by himself: all kinde of ill
Did with his liquour slide into his veins.
The drunkard forfets Man, and doth devest
All worldly right, save what he hath by beast.

(31-36)

(ii) Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod;
The stormie working soul spits lies and froth.
Dare to be true. Nothing can need a ly:
A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby.

(75-79)

(iii) Money thou bane of blisse, and source of wo
Whence com'st thou, that thou art so fresh and fine?
I know thy parentage is base and low:
Man found thee poore and dirtie in a mine.

('Avarice', 1-4)

(iv) Man calleth thee wealth, who made thee rich
And while he digs out thee, falls in the ditch.

(ibid., 13-14)

(v) Yet in thy thriving still misdoubt some evil;
Lest gaining gain on thee, and make thee dimme
To all things els.

('The Church-porch', 163-165)

Herbert has tried to impress his readers with the importance of going to church regularly on all Sundays:

Sundaies observe: think when the bells do chime,
'Tis angels musick; therefore come not late.
God then deals blessings: If a King did so,
Who would not haste, nay give, to see the show.

(ibid., 387-390)

Herbert considered all manner of ostentation and distraction, particularly for one trying to concentrate his mind upon God. The purity of a heart given to God is what he prized most. So he has called upon the women of the parish not to be punctilious about their dress or make-up for which they are often late for church.
He has advised them, instead, to devote their thoughts to God:

Stay not for the 'other pin': why thou hast lost
A joy for it worth worlds. Thus hell does jest
Away thy blessings, and extremely flout thee,
Thy clothes being fast, but thy soul loose about thee,

(ibus., 410-414)

In the following lines, the poet has appealed to the reader to spend some time in silence and meditation:

By all means use sometimes to be alone also.
Salute thy self: see what thy soul doth wear,
Dare to look in thy chest, for 'tis thine own:
And tumble up and down what thou find'st there.

(ibus., 145-148)

Herbert considers it desirable for a man to take stock at night of his activities during the day. He thus recommends self-analysis for preserving the purity of the soul:

Summe up at night, what thou hast done by day;
And in the morning, what thou hast to do
Dresse and undresse thy soul.

(ibus., 451-453)

The following lines present Herbert’s own analysis of the degradation that was slowly undermining the English society of his day. Here also he spoke out as he felt:

0 England! full of sinne, but more of sloth;
Spit out thy flegme, and fill thy brest with glorie:
Thy Gentrie bleats, as if thy native cloth
Transfus'd a sheepishness into thy storie:
Not that they all are so; but that the most
Are gone to grasse, and in the pasture lost.

(ibus., 91-96)

Herbert is equally forthright in his criticism of the system of education, then prevailing, as being responsible for many of the social ills of the day. He also deplored the lack of proper care in the upbringing of children:
This losse springs chiefly from our education.
Some till their ground, but let weeds choke their sonne:
Some mark a partridge, never their childes fashion:
Some ship them over, and the thing is done.
Studie their art, make it thy great designe;
And if God's image move thee not, let thine.

(ibid., 97-102)

Herbert has shown the same sincerity and candour in his relationship with God also. The following lines, where he has asked Him not to try his strength on a poor afflicted mortal, offer an instance in point:

Wilt thou meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch
A crumme of dust from heav'n to hell?
Will great God measure with a wretch?
Shall he thy stature spell?

('The Temper I', 13-16)

Lamenting the sudden loss of his joy which he enjoyed some little while ago, Herbert addresses in the following lines a heart-felt prayer to God to save him:

It cannot be. Where is that mightie joy,
Which just now took up all my heart?
Lord, if thou must needs use thy dart,
Save that, and me; or sin for both destroy.

('The Temper II', 1-4)

Commenting on the utter hollowness of pomp and show, the poet has presented death as a great equalizer in these lines:

The brags of life are but a nine days wonder;
And after death the fumes that spring
From private bodies make as big a thunder,
As those which rise from a huge king.

('Content', 21-24)

In a virtual surge of verses, quoted below, Herbert has presented the emptiness of life and its ephemeral pleasures. His terse and incisive style is indeed impressive:
False glozing pleasures, casks of happinesse
Foolish night-fires, womens and childrens wishes,
Chases in Arras, guilded emotinesse,
Shadows well mounted, dreams in a career,
Embroider'd lyes, nothing between two dishes;
These are the pleasures here.

('Dotage', 1-6)

But neither the unsubstantiality of life, nor its diversity,
can diminish the poet's faith in God, for he has experienced the
underlying unity of things all of which he has accepted as mani-
festations of the Divine Being. In the following lines, the poet
has presented a candid record of this realisation:

All things that are, though they have sev'rall wayes,
Yet in their being joyn with on advise
To honour thee: and so I give thee praise
In all my other hymnes, but in this twice.

('Providen ce', 145-148)

Herbert's famous poem, 'Easter-wings', has been subjected to
much insensitive comment by critics who were interested more in
ridiculing the form than in appreciating the beautifully expressive
words that embellish this perfect pattern-poem. But the impact of
the movement of the stanzas can be easily felt. In the first part,
there is a clear movement from sin to salvation, and in the
second, a delicate one from sickness to health. The meaning of the
poem can be easily grasped from its graphic pattern, and it does
not easily fade from the reader's mind. It is reproduced below:

Lord who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
0 let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne:
Thou didst so punish sinne,
And still with sickness and shame
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

The poem has brought out Herbert's emotions and his undying faith most truthfully.

Lastly, in a poem of two brief stanzas, aptly called 'Bitter-Sweet', we discover what may be called a kind of 'complaining love' of the poet for God. The expression of a poet's feeling, as free and open as in this poem, is indeed rare even in devotional poetry. The poem is quoted:

Ah! my deare angrie Lord,
Since thou dost love, yet strike;
Cast down, yet help afford;
Sure I will do the like.

I will complain, yet praise;
I will bewail, approve:
And all my sowe – sweet dayes
I will lament and love.

Three broad aspects of Herbert's poetry, viz. the moral, the spiritual, and the aesthetic, as inherent in his poetry, now emerge distinctly from the foregoing account. For a proper appreciation of Herbert's poetry, it is necessary to recognize them exactly. It can be reiterated here that neither as a poet nor as a person is Herbert determined fully by the label 'metaphysical'. Also,
Herbert as a man was not a saint or a 'gentle Jesus', as he has been generally made out to be. He was perfectly aware of his short-comings, his failures, and the instability of his emotion till he found employment in the service of the Lord. Despite his turbulent 'inner-weather' and 'passion and choler', he was humbly devoted to God, and in spite of his intense spiritual conflicts, he was steady in his devotion. The kaleidoscopic nature of his emotions, his 'sudden-soul', 'youth and fierceness', and the hitherto unexplored personal attributes discussed in this chapter, are expected to provide us useful insight into Herbert's mind and personality.