

“IF THE HEART BE MOVED”: THE TRIUMPH OF THE HEART  
IN MILTON, HERBERT, AND DONNE

by

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## ABSTRACT

John Milton, George Herbert, and John Donne all struggle to hold onto the heart as the center of man and the place of inspiration and volition. In the seventeenth century, four intertwined challenges to how people think about the heart collide. In anatomy, Harvey's treatise *On the Motion of the Heart and the Blood* (1628) persuaded many people to think of the heart as a mere pump rather than a mysterious seat of knowledge and volition. Milton, Herbert, and Donne respond to this controversial shift and work to realign the heart with the mystical presence of God. In philosophy, Descartes's theory of dualism changed how people thought of the connection between the heart and the mind. Milton confronts Descartes's dualistic theories by upholding monism in his epic *Paradise Lost* and portraying his archfiend, Satan, as a dualistic philosopher. In economics, anxieties concerning the mass-production of books complicated the Judeo-Christian belief that God writes on individual hearts in a personal, non-manufactured way. Herbert chooses to avoid mass-producing his works during his life due to his fear that "copying out" the writing in his heart would be diluted through the printing process. Milton, however, chooses to use the vehicle of print to advance his belief that the most lasting monuments are inscriptions written by God in hearts. In theology, the impassioned controversy about the interiority versus outward signs of belief that erupted in the sixteenth century continues to be debated in the seventeenth century and affects how these theological poets conceptualize the heart. Herbert and Donne characterize the heart as an intimate sphere that God must personally break and appropriate, whereas Milton demonstrates in "The Passion" that the crucifixion of

Christ is a distinct and revered topic that cannot be expressed on physical paper but must be completed by the Spirit of God inside each believer's fleshy heart. This project shows how Milton, Herbert, and Donne reinforce the presence of God working and writing in believers' hearts when the very nature and understanding of the heart is evolving and moving away from any connection with the divine.

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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: “WHAT IS THE HEART”?.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: HEART AND BODY: “THOUGH ELEMENTS CHANGE . . . KEEP A STANDING MAJESTY IN ME” .....	22
CHAPTER THREE: HEART AND MIND: DOES THE “HEART OF MAN SUFFICE TO COMPREHEND”?.....	62
CHAPTER FOUR: HEART AND BOOK: “WITH DEEP IMPRESSION TOOK” .....	92
CHAPTER FIVE: PASSION AND THE HEART: “NOTHING SATISFIED” .....	133
REFERENCES.....	166

## CHAPTER ONE

### “WHAT IS THE HEART”?

“How little of a *Man* is the *Heart*, and yet it is all, by which he *is*.”  
John Donne, “Meditation XI”

A HEART alone  
Is such a stone,  
As nothing but  
Thy pow'r doth cut.  
Wherefore each part  
Of my hard heart  
Meets in this frame  
To praise thy name.

George Herbert “The Altar” 5-12

. . . but from Heav'n  
Hee to his own a Comforter will send,  
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
His Spirit within them, and the Law of Faith  
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,  
To guide them in all truth.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 11.485-90

Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Early Modern Era, the heart was conceptualized not only as the seat of emotions and desires but also of the intellectual faculties such as understanding, discernment, and consciousness. Since man's heart was considered the seat of intelligence and will, it followed that the heart was the physical place where God communicates with believers. In the seventeenth century, however, changes in anatomy, philosophy, economics, and theology disputed the heart as the seat of intellectual faculties, which in turn, challenged long-standing metaphysical beliefs that God interacts with believers through their hearts. In early modern England, the redefinition of what the heart was and the widespread

questioning of its function unsettled and complicated centuries of fundamental beliefs. The revolution in how people thought about the heart changed how people believed and communicated with God, and even cast doubt on the existence of God all together. Seventeenth-century poets such as George Herbert, John Donne, and John Milton struggled to understand this mystical organ and its connection with the divine in their scientifically and theologically shifting world. These poets did not want to abandon the heart as the spiritual and physical core of man, but they also faced the challenge of confronting the widespread scientific changes that questioned their doctrines. Herbert, Donne, and Milton encountered the same dilemma: how does a theologically minded poet reinforce the presence of God working and writing in believers' hearts when the very nature and understanding of the heart is evolving and moving away from any connection with the divine? This project shows how these three poets navigate the tension between a desire for continuity with medieval religious beliefs and the making of modern selfhood that dethrones the heart as the core of man.

Understanding how and why these poets describe the heart in particular ways allows us to better understand where each poet falls in both the scientific disputes and theological debates that characterize early modern England. Modern critics often miss the complex and subtle conversation in which these authors are engaged; a fuller understanding of how these theological poets describe the heart—a crucial element of their belief systems—will allow us to approach anew questions about identity and selfhood, religion and morality in the seventeenth century. My project not only illuminates the cardiocentric poetry and theology of these authors but also reveals a clearer picture of the larger conversation taking place in the seventeenth century about the heart and its relationship to what it means to be human. Tiffany Werth argues that in the seventeenth century “belief in God becomes synonymous with being” (183). Therefore, since



the central tenet that man believes God with his heart was being questioned in the seventeenth century, people were also questioning what it meant to be human and if God existed at all. This upheaval in thought shook the foundations of Herbert's, Donne's, and Milton's beliefs just as scientific questions today concerning human cloning, when life begins, and when life should end disturb and complicate our moral and ethical belief systems.

Questions still exist in the twenty-first century on what it means to a person to have a heart or brain transplant. Do such transplants change a person's personality? Does it affect a person's soul to have someone else's heart or brain? In 2011, medical students at the University of Otago were interviewed in regards to their thoughts about removing human hearts and brains. The students had very mixed opinions. Some had severe difficulty with the idea of transplanting a human brain because they said the brain "made a person who they were" (Martyn 407). Others had emotional and physical reactions when removing a human heart, which they viewed as the "seat of emotion" (Martyn 407). Even the most educated individuals in the twenty-first century are unsure of the complex nature and function of the heart and brain and are skeptical about performing various medical procedures relating to these organs. Questions concerning the location of the soul still abound in modern medicine as well. In his 1998 book *The Second Brain*, Michael D. Gershon claims humans have what amounts to another small brain located in the gut. His theory that there exists an enteric nervous system which manages every aspect of digestion by using many of the same tools that the first brain does is widely accepted today: "The enteric nervous system is nearly self-contained, assessing conditions, deciding on courses of action, and initiating responses on its own" (Webb 183). Gershon has found that this second brain can even send messages up to the first brain. Medical discoveries such as Gershon's continue to decenter our understanding of the self. Even with modern technology, doctors and

scientists question how the human body functions as well as where a person's soul resides. The questions we ponder today concerning the minute workings of the human body are just a taste of the more dramatic upheaval in the seventeenth century that influenced how people thought about the heart and its connection with the divine.

In the seventeenth century, four intertwined challenges to how people think about the heart collide. These four challenges serve as nexus points for chapters two through five and work together to define what I refer to as the “revolution of the heart” in the seventeenth century. In anatomy, Harvey's treatise *On the Motion of the Heart and the Blood* (1628) persuaded many people to think of the heart as a mere pump rather than a mysterious seat of knowledge and volition. Herbert, Donne, and Milton responded to this controversial shift and, through their writings, work to realign the heart with the mystical presence of God. In philosophy, Descartes's theory of dualism (*Passions of the Soul*, 1646) changed how people thought of the connection between the heart and the mind. Milton confronts Descartes's dualistic theories by upholding monism in his epic *Paradise Lost*, and portraying his archfiend, Satan, as a dualistic philosopher lost in his reasoning. In the print industry, anxieties concerning mass production complicated the Judeo-Christian belief that God writes on individual hearts in a personal, non-manufactured way. Herbert chooses to avoid mass-producing his works during his life due to his fear that “copying out” the writing in his heart would be diluted through the printing process. Milton, however, chooses to use the vehicle of print to advance his belief that the most lasting monuments are inscriptions written by God in hearts. In theology, the impassioned controversy about the interiority versus outward signs of belief that erupted with Martin Luther in the sixteenth century continues to be debated in the seventeenth century and affects how these theological poets conceptualize the heart. Herbert and Donne characterize the heart as an intimate sphere that God

must personally break and appropriate, whereas Milton demonstrates in “The Passion” that the crucifixion of Christ is a distinct and revered topic that cannot be expressed on physical paper but must be completed by the Spirit of God inside each believer’s fleshy heart. While critics have studied Harvey’s treatise, Descartes’s dualism, the growing book industry, and changes in theology, I bring these four topics together in order to show how Herbert’s, Donne’s, and Milton’s conceptions of the heart are responsive to and affect the dramatic upheaval of thought concerning the heart in the seventeenth century.

Herbert, Donne, and Milton live at the long historical moment when the true physiological understanding of how the heart functions is recognized by anatomists. During the seventeenth century the dispensation that saw the liver as the primary organ in the body, as well as the dispensation that sought to enthrone the brain as the primary organ, were in play with yet a third movement that bestows primacy on the heart. Harvey, Donne, Herbert, and Milton belong to this third movement, and they share, with important differences, a rhetoric that attempts to understand the heart’s place within anatomy, philosophy, economics, and theology. Chapter two thus investigates the intersection of anatomy and poetry in the seventeenth century and explores the differences in how each poet conceptualizes his relationship with God: Herbert allows spiritual beliefs to overshadow any uncertainties he has concerning the link between the physical and metaphysical worlds; Donne clings to a suspended, negative uncertainty as a space of ecstasy and inspiration; Milton embraces ambiguities and uses the debate questioning the centrality of the heart to move closer to a better understanding of the interconnectedness of the physical and metaphysical realms.

Chapter three investigates how Milton’s descriptions of the heart are complicated by the emerging mechanist philosophies of René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes in the mid-seventeenth

century. Unlike Descartes and Hobbes, Milton locates the heart, not the brain, as the primary site of belief, consciousness, and will. To combat the philosophical and scientific movements that advanced a belief in mechanism and a corresponding divorce from a belief in free will, Milton breaks with centuries of Christian orthodoxy concerning dualism, and turns to a belief in monism. Monism allows him to merge current scientific reasoning with his belief in free will, while still maintaining that the heart freely thinks, feels, believes, and communicates with the divine. Milton finds that Hobbes's theories fail to explain how matter can think and Descartes's theories fail to explain adequately how the mind and body communicate. The heart for Milton is thus both the physical and spiritual core of man that cannot be displaced, for dethroning the heart would destroy Milton's belief that man is created by God and sustained by God through his living spirit working within him.

Chapter four shows how the anxieties concerning the growing book industry, as well as the debate whether the worship of God should be a public, outward act or a private, internal belief, are reflected and amplified in how Herbert and Milton describe the heart. Unlike Herbert, Milton chooses to have his works printed during his lifetime, which allows him to promote the heart as the vital book that will outlive physical books and monuments. Milton's descriptions of the heart show that he accepts the growing book industry, while, at the same time, he upholds the more traditional theological belief that writing on a person's heart is a divine publication that cannot be copied or mass-produced by man. Herbert, just as he does not want his words to be laden with hackneyed metaphors and standard poetical "trim inventions," does not want his poems to be manufactured and "decked with sense [cents] as if it were to sell" ("Jordan II" 6). By not having his works published during his life, Herbert emphasizes that he values the heart as an internal, personal book written upon by God's Spirit more than a material book written to be

printed, mass-produced, and sold. By focusing on how Herbert and Milton describe the heart, chapter four examines how these two poets navigate the intersection of an economic and cultural discussion concerning the production and marketing of books, and a theological and social discourse concerning the nature of belief and faith.

The final chapter illustrates how Herbert and Milton struggle to translate God's inscription on their hearts in their own language-bound poetry. Herbert concludes in his poem "Good Friday" that God must subsume the poet's identity and become the author of his poems, while Milton insists in "On Shakespeare" that the most powerful poetry leaves an impression written in hearts, not on the page, which serves as a lasting testament to be revered. By completing "Good Friday," Herbert opens the door for his poem to become that which is revered rather than the actual crucifixion of Christ. Because he does not share Milton's monist beliefs, Herbert does not conclude that he should abandon writing all together; he clings to a belief that God can write for him rather than a belief that the physical words of his poetry and the spiritual writing in his heart are inseparable. In "The Passion" Milton concludes that the most spiritually important event, the crucifixion of Christ, cannot be accurately expressed in words but must transcend human language and be written in the heart. Milton's passion poem illustrates that without Christ's sacrifice, man cannot have a fleshy, inscribed heart. Christ's sacrifice is God's ultimate gift of grace that breaks man's hardened heart and allows the Spirit to enter into man's soul and write. Milton ends "The Passion" with "nothing" because he is struck speechless with awe at Christ's sacrifice and his belief that the ultimate passion poem is written in the soft, fleshy hearts of believers.

Nearly two thousand years before Herbert, Donne, and Milton struggled to understand the heart, philosophers of antiquity debated if the heart was the seat of the soul, the passions and

emotions, and the intellect. While the philosophers were not always in agreement, their work shows that the heart has remained throughout history vital to human life and culture. Before exploring more fully how seventeenth-century poets describe the heart, it is important to understand the history of the heart prior to the seventeenth-century. This chapter examines the history of the heart as both a physical object—an incredible, unceasing pumping heart—as well as an object with a compelling metaphorical and spiritual existence in the human imagination and belief structure.

Since the fifth century B.C.E., philosophers and physicians have debated which organ is the supreme authority in the body and which organ is the seat of the soul, human consciousness, and emotion. The lungs, heart, brain, and liver have all been viewed as the core of man. Ancient Greece, a culture centered on oral rhetoric and public speech, first identified the lungs as the source of speech, language, and the will, and thus determined that the lungs housed the soul. In the fifth century B.C.E., the physician Alcmaeon of Croton displaced the lungs as the location of the soul and positioned the brain as the core of man. He supported his belief by dissecting animal corpses and showing that all of the senses are connected to the brain (Crivellato and Ribatti 329). Around 400 B.C.E., Hippocrates of Cos supported Alcmaeon's theories by identifying that disorders such as epilepsy originate from defects of the brain. Alcmaeon argued that "the brain has the most power in man. If it is in sound condition, it is our interpreter of the things . . . The eyes and ears and tongue and hands and feet do whatsoever the brain determines; for there is an element of intelligence in the whole body . . . but it is the brain that is the messenger to the understanding" (Kirk 449). In *De morbo sacro*, Alcmaeon continues, "Our pleasures, joys, laughter and jests arise from no other source than the brain; and so do our pains,

grief, anxieties and tears. Through it ... we also discern ugly and beautiful, bad and good, pleasant and unpleasant” (Jones 174-5).

Like physicians and philosophers before him, Plato (427-347 BCE) maintained the belief that the brain is the center of man when he posits the existence of three soul species: the logos, which is immortal and bound to the head; the thymos, responsible for feelings and bound in the chest with the heart as a guardian; and epithymetikon as the soul of nourishment between the diaphragm and umbilicus as the seat of passions and desire (Crivellato and Ribatti 331). For Plato, the seat of intellect is associated with the brain and the feelings associated with the soul. It is not until Aristotle’s teachings that the heart becomes the principality in the body.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), notably the first anatomist in the modern sense of this term, overturns Plato’s theories and argues that all soul faculties reside in the heart. He posits that the soul, located in the heart is the primary cause of living, perceiving, and thinking. Moreover, he regards the heart as the central organ of the body, the principle of life, the generator of body heat, the font of blood, and the origin of vessels (*Historia Animalium* 26). To strengthen his claims, he also notes that the heart is the organ that develops first in the embryo (Crivellato and Ribatti 331). His theories that the heart is the location in the body where all motions begin and end was widely accepted both during his lifetime and for centuries to follow: “all motions of sensation, including those produced by what is pleasant and painful, undoubtedly begin in the heart and have their final ending there” (Aristotle 237). To further dethrone the brain-centered teachings of Plato, Aristotle argues that the brain is lacking in sensation and its true function is to cool, by means of a secretion called phlegm, the great heat generated by the heart. (Erickson 4).

Aristotle’s cardiocentric belief enjoyed great success for centuries. It was accepted and supported by the Peripatetic tradition, by Athenaeus of Attalia, the founder of the Pneumatist

medical sect (first century B.C.E.), and by all the Stoics who championed the heart as the seat of the logos, the universal intelligence. The Hippocratic Treatise, *De corde*, a text of controversial date but almost certainly post-Aristotelian, notes that the heart contained “human intelligence, the principle which rules over the rest of the soul” (Niemeier 9). According to the Hippocratic Treatise, the heart is the place of mental functioning, for the mind is said to reside in the left ventricle of the heart (Crivellato and Ribatti 332).

Aristotle’s main adversary to his cardiocentric theories is Galen of Pergamon (129 to about 216 B.C.E.). Galen proposed “a contradictory, multipolar model, suggesting that many functions that Aristotle attributed to the heart were in fact functions of the brain and liver” (Webb 19-20). In *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, Galen explains, “The liver is the source of the veins and the principal instrument of sanguification” (221). For Galen, the liver, not the heart, was considered the warmest and moistest organ that most actively formed blood and was thus the fountain of life and purity. Galen also claimed that the brain was that part that “receives all sensations, produces images, and understands thoughts” (*On the Natural Faculties* 47). In Galen’s scheme, blood is constantly being remade in the liver and moved around and eventually secreted out of the body through the skin by means of a complex series of propulsions and attractions (Webb 7).

Both Aristotle’s theory that the heart is the central, thinking organ in the body and Galen’s theory promoting the liver and brain as central organs persisted into the seventeenth century until the emergence of Harvey’s discoveries; however, throughout the medieval era and into the early modern era, religious scholars notably sided with Aristotle’s cardiocentric beliefs. The Judeo-Christian Scriptures, along with the writings of Augustine, connect the heart with moral understanding, knowledge, judgment, and communication with the divine. King Solomon



writes in Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

The phrase “with all diligence” (*mikkol-mishmar*) literally means “more than anything that might be guarded”; Solomon instructs believers to guard their hearts more than anything else because a “map” (*lev*) to life is drawn directly from a person’s heart.<sup>1</sup> According to Scriptures, the heart of a man is the core of his being. The Apostle Paul not only argues that the heart is the center of man but he also affirms that external writing is inferior to the internal writing of the Spirit of God on human hearts:

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. (2 Corinthians 3:1-3)

In conjunction with Paul’s letters, St. Augustine describes the heart as a place of writing, reading, and interpretation, which is a central tenet that early modern poets such as Herbert, Donne, and Milton uphold.

Augustine often grounded his theology in concrete terms, so it is compelling to examine how he conceived of the heart as a physical text. In his *Confessions*, he writes, “Then Thou, O Lord, little by little with most tender and most merciful hand, touching and composing my heart, didst persuade me—considering what innumerable things I believed, which I saw not, nor was present while they were done” [*Manu mitissima et misericordissima pertractans et componens cor meum*] (IV, vol. 1, 283). Augustine not only envisions the Lord’s hand physically touching his heart—thus connected with the art of writing with one’s hand—but he explains that the

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<sup>1</sup> Solomon also states in Proverbs: “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (3:1-6). This Old Testament verse likely prompted Paul to reference tables and the heart in the New Testament.

Lord's hand persuaded him by composing on his heart. By using "composing," [*compones*] (or in some translations, "hand working,") Augustine explains that the Lord both forms man's heart and also writes on man's heart, thus becoming its author. For Augustine, God is the book maker and the author. It is man's duty to read and ponder the text written within. Augustine frequently imagines God's hand touching and then composing on a human heart, images which profoundly influence Milton and his descriptions of God's Spirit physically engraving on human hearts.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Augustine writes in his autobiography that "Thou hast stricken my heart with Thy word," [*percussisti cor meum verbo tuo*] (X, vi, vol. 2, 87). There is a physicality to Augustine's wording that is hard to dismiss. He explains that his heart is "stricken," [*percussisti*] which, at first, suggests that his heart is wounded or penetrated in a violent way; however, stricken [*percussisti*] also means "to mark with lines" or to write upon. This second definition helps clarify the complete passage, for Augustine explains that his heart has been "stricken" with "Thy word" (X, vi, vol. 2, 87). His heart has been marked with the words of Scripture, not just metaphorically, but forcefully and physically. This belief that the heart is a palpable text is seen in various other early medieval texts, as documented by historian Eric Jager. Furthermore, Jager contends, as I do, that "throughout his writings, Augustine portrayed the heart as a place of 'writing,' 'erasure,' 'reading,' 'interpretation,' and other textual operations" (28). In his *Confessions*, Augustine writes, "My heart, O Lord, touched with the words of Thy Holy Scripture, is much busied" [*in hac inopia vitae meae pulsatum verbis sanctae scripturae tuae*] (XII, I, vol. 2, 289). Again, Augustine explains that his heart was touched with Scripture by God's own hand, corporeally impressed with God's words.

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<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on physical touch could also hearken back to the creation account in Genesis 2. Everything except man was brought into existence with "God said," but with man, God "formed" man of the dust of the ground. God then made Eve through the act of divine surgery: he removed a rib from Adam and created Eve from it. "Formed" (*yatsar*), means to mold into a shape, to fashion and press.

Like Augustine, Milton in *Paradise Lost* views matter as a “seedbed” that can be infused with life. In *Christian Doctrine* Milton explains:

Matter is not an evil thing, nor should it be thought worthless, but is good and is a seedbed for the subsequent production of every good thing. It was a substance—to be derived from no other source than the fountain of all substance—disordered at first and formless, which God thereafter arranged and made lovely. (6.308)

God’s spirit, and thus His word, must infuse matter (material body/stony hearts) to transform it to a higher, spiritual degree. D. Bentley Hart warns that “One should not overlook how thoroughly for Milton the material realm is implicated in the divine life, nor should one ignore his apparent conviction that the created cosmos is a ramification of the divine presence” (21). Both Augustine and Milton insist that God uses matter for his divine purpose, and, more important, that God pours his Spirit within human hearts as a living text.

Augustine, in his notes to Psalm 57, explains what he means when he states in his *Confessions*: “[God] is within the inmost heart,” [*intimus cordi est, sed cor erravit ab eo*] (or an alternate translation: “[God] is within the very heart”) (IV, xii, vol. 1, 180). Augustine explains that “because men, seeking things without, become strange even to themselves, the written law also was given to them; not because it was not already written in their hearts, but because thou wert strayed, as a vagabond, from thy own heart, so He, who is everywhere, laid hold on thee, and recalled thee to thine own inward self” (Wiersbe 39). Augustine explains that the written scriptures given to Moses are not the original law given to man by God, but that God’s Word was first written into man’s heart. The outward law is merely a copy that aids in drawing weary men back to Him. According to this logic, the original and pure Word of God is inscribed within hearts, not on stone tablets and not within the brain. This concept is also clearly laid out in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. After Adam falls he asks, “In yonder nether world where shall I seek / His bright appearances, or foot-step trace?” (11.328-29). Through Michael, God consoles Adam

and Eve, explaining that each of them “but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee” (12.586-87). If they accept God’s grace, outside of Eden they will have a paradise within them of softened hearts where the Holy Spirit can directly write, advise, and communicate with their temporal bodies, much like Augustine’s belief that the Word of God is inscribed within believer’s hearts.

Passages such as these demonstrate Augustine’s cardiocentric beliefs as well as his belief that the heart itself as a physical text could be corporally struck and palpably written upon with actual words. In *The Book of the Heart*, Historian Eric Jager documents how many medieval texts were actually created in the shape of hearts and how these early books pointed to an understanding that the heart itself could be a place to record text. Additionally, Jeffrey Walker in *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* discusses the classical understanding of enthymeme, stating that the term is derived from thymos, meaning “heart,” “mind,” or “spirit” as the seat of emotion, thought, wish, desire, intentionality, or will (173). Walker’s discussion illuminates the intricacies of the classical enthymeme that sheds light on how classical writers, as well as Milton, thought about how the heart could be seen as contributing to a person’s thoughts and decisions. Unearthing the connection between the heart and the will prior to the seventeenth century is an important consideration when looking at how Herbert, Donne, and Milton conceive of the heart in the seventeenth century as a readable text that should function as a guide. My work demonstrates that for Augustine, and later Milton, it is important both conceptually and linguistically to think about the heart as a type of physical book. The heart is grounded in the physical world, has written text inscribed upon it, and is both a palpable and also metaphysical vehicle that allows God to communicate with his believers.

In the middle ages, books were handwritten and rare, and often associated with the sacred, intimate sphere of the heart. As books became more commonplace with the introduction

of printing presses, the belief that the heart was an intimate place where God communicates with believers dissipated. The act of reading and writing became less personal, and in many cases, less sacred, while the belief that God intimately writes in believers' hearts became more symbolic than physical. As we will see, Milton pushes against this movement to dematerialize the presence of the divine in hearts because he realized that a decentering of the heart would lead to a decentering of God altogether. The more man grew to rely upon his own brain the less man believed in a God-inspired heart. Jager documents the shift to silent reading in the fifteenth century that made reading a more self-centered experience; however, my work expands upon Jager's findings to show that there is a dramatic move from reading the "letter" of text to reading the "spirit" of text in the seventeenth century. In addition to other seventeenth-century philosophers and scholars, theological poets such as Herbert, Donne, and Milton do not abandon the heart as the core of man. In light of the movement to decenter the heart, these poets strengthen their claims concerning the heart while substantiating the need for man to rely upon the spirit of God rather than the letter of even their own poetry. My project highlights the struggle to hold onto the heart as the center of man and the place of inspiration and volition.

Unlike Jager, who argues that the "emerging empiricist (and often materialist) psychology that emerged after Gutenberg encouraged a more cerebral centering of the self," I argue that the shift to the brain is not universal in the seventeenth century and remains contested by many, including theological poets such as Milton, Herbert, and Donne. Scott Manning Stevens' research questions if the heart is in fact displaced by the brain in the seventeenth century; Stevens argues that "the heart conversely seems often on the verge of losing its materiality in discourse . . . due to its semiotic over determination" (276). I disagree with Stevens: the heart does not lose its materiality in the seventeenth century, but gains an important

and material existence in the theological poetry of the seventeenth century precisely because of the contemporary controversy concerning its centrality and importance. Milton, Herbert, and Donne show resistance in their works to the decentering of the heart, while simultaneously incorporating language that points to the changes in anatomy, philosophy, economics, and theology that fuel the shift: these poets are acutely aware of the challenges to the heart as the primary site of belief, will, intellect, inspiration, and communication with God. All three poets to various degrees assimilate the language of their contemporaries who promote the brain as the central organ in man in order to more forcefully reposition the heart as the core and, ultimately, the lasting text of man. We will see also that Milton, more than Herbert and Donne, emphasizes the centrality of the heart in order to accentuate man's intimate need to retreat even from written language to the more powerful and divine inscription in the heart.

Seventeenth-century poetry is influenced by the language and consequences of new scientific discoveries, but the works of Herbert, Donne, and Milton reveal a profound resistance to abandoning the heart as man's core. Herbert's "Mattins" exemplifies the riddle that the heart presents to seventeenth-century poets:

My God, what is a heart?  
Silver, or gold, or precious stone,  
Or star, or rainbow, or a part  
Of all these things or all of them in one?

My God, what is a heart?  
That thou should'st it so eye, and woo,  
Pouring upon it all thy art,  
As if that thou hadst nothing else to do? (5-12)

Herbert realizes his inability to clearly define the heart in purely physical terms. He offers various hypotheses about the physical nature of the heart, questioning if the heart is silver, gold, or precious stone. By incorporating the word stone, Herbert not only adds to his list of physical

materials but also incorporates an allusion to—and likely a fear of having—a hard heart. Yet, he still refers to the stone as being “precious,” acknowledging his heart’s intrinsic worth. When these options of describing the heart fall short, he muses whether the heart is a star, a rainbow, or a part or all of these remote objects that can be seen but not touched. Herbert’s leap to material yet out-of-grasp objects illuminates his desire to understand the heart in both material and non-material ways. He yearns to join the physical and metaphysical worlds, but he does not know how to bridge the gap between science and theology.

Without offering a clear answer grounded in a physical description, Herbert changes directions and only ponders the theological function of a heart. Herbert speculates why God should look at a heart, woo it, and pour himself upon it, actions which suggest a physical interaction between God and man. Herbert even questions why God would take the time and effort to interact with lowly human hearts, for “hadst [God] nothing else to do?”(12). Herbert’s question echoes David’s petition in Psalms 8:4, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” While undermining his own significance, Herbert widens the gap between his heart and God’s when he contemplates if his heart is even worth God’s consideration. This widening actually intensifies Herbert’s belief in his maker, which in turn, brings Herbert closer to understanding who God is. The clearest answer Herbert offers to his question “what is a heart” comes in the next stanza where he proclaims that “Indeed man’s whole estate / Amounts (and richly) to serve thee” (13-14). Herbert changes the question itself from “what is the heart?” to “what is man’s purpose?” and answers his riddle by simply proclaiming that the heart is the essential part of the “whole estate” of man that wholly exists to serve God. Herbert acknowledges his servant state and reveres his God as his master and maker. Herbert offers an alternative solution to the

enigmatic question “what is the heart” that many of his contemporaries, such as Milton, attempt to answer in more scientific and concrete ways.

As we will see in the next chapters, throughout his career, Donne shuns static beliefs and predictable poems and sermons. In “Holy Sonnet X,” Donne explains that he often “change[s] in vows, and in devotion,” and that “Those are my best days, when I shake with feare” (4, 14). He prefers to stretch his faith and descriptions, searching for new ways to express his fluctuating ideas without arriving at any one belief.<sup>3</sup> In the poem “The Broken Heart,” he belittles the heart, saying “Ah, what a trifle is a heart” (9). A few lines later he imagines that “If [his heart] would have gone to thee, I know / Mine would have taught thine heart to show / More pity unto me” (21-3). He believes his heart might train his lover’s heart; however, just when the reader thinks the heart can be a positive force to join two people in love, Donne shatters the reader’s expectations and describes the heart as an almost empty space that is filled with “Those pieces still” of his broken heart (28). The speaker laments his “rags of heart” that “can love no more” and is left to mourn the broken, inept heart at the end of the poem (31-2). This description is the opposite of his description in “Sonnet XIV” where he begs for God to “Batter his heart,” and “break, blow, burn,” his heart in order to “make [him] new” (1, 4). In “The Broken Heart,” Donne finds no peace when his heart is shattered; but in “Sonnet XIV,” the speaker explains that he can only become new and spiritually whole if his heart is broken. Throughout his career Donne experiments with different ways to describe the heart, seldom describing the heart in a consistent fashion; yet, he often returns to the idea that the heart is a text that can be written

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<sup>3</sup> Heather Dubrow argues that Donne was uneasy about practicing straightforward literary imitation, and he tends to distance himself from the very traditions that he seems to be working within (Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995), 211-14).



upon, as well as an actual object that can be broken or even sent to others as a hand-written letter; Donne desires to describe the spiritual, thinking organ of the heart in physical terms.<sup>4</sup>

In a letter to Rowland Woodward, Donne imagines that even after he is dead parts of him will remain in his letters: “for it / Hath my name, words, feet, heart, minde and wit” (6). Donne is not simply stating that his fame will live after him through his poetry; he imagines that his letters represent actual traces of himself that will live on after his death. This illuminates his dualistic beliefs that his body and soul are two distinct essences that can live without each other. Donne imagines his writings as pieces of himself, often ending his letters by explaining that he was including his heart in the actual envelope. In a letter to George Garrard’s sister, Martha, he explains, “since I cannot stay you here, I will come thither to you; which I do, by wrapping up in this paper, the heart of Your most affectionate servant J. Donne” (41). Donne reveals an affinity for letters because of their ability to encapsulate the writer in a physically intimate way. Unlike Herbert, Donne accentuates the materiality of the heart alongside his belief in the spiritual characteristics of a God-centered heart, yet he does not go as far as Milton whose descriptions of the heart are based in monism.

Donne’s poem “The Blossom” describes another picture of the heart that is much different than Milton’s description of Adam’s and Eve’s ability to share “one heart” even when they are physically apart. In “The Blossom,” the speaker initially wants his lover’s heart to stay with him while the rest of her body is away; however, he contends later that a “Naked thinking heart” that “makes no show” is to a woman but a “kind of ghost” (27-8). Here Donne argues that much is missing if the heart is not with the rest of the body, whereas Milton argues, at least prior

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<sup>4</sup> Targoff argues, “Donne’s insistence on love as a bodily as well as spiritual experience differentiates him from the vast majority of early modern practitioners in the ‘philosophy of love.’ For Renaissance Neoplatonists, the body is at best a preliminary medium through which a deeper, more enduring connection to the soul is conducted; at worst, it is a harmful distraction, obstructing the lover from his or her true focus on heavenly, spiritual beauty” (58).

to the fall of man, that the heart itself is never separated from the body because it is both spirit and body at the same time. Unlike the characters in “The Blossom,” Adam and Eve continue to share their “One heart” at all times. This difference depends on the contrast between Donne’s dualism and Milton’s monism.<sup>5</sup> While Donne yearns to connect the body and the soul, he is never able to make the leap to monism. The mature Milton, on the other hand, argues that all matter is of one essence, and thus there could not be such a thing as a “naked thinking heart” because body and soul, flesh and spirit, are one and cannot be severed.

Herbert, Donne, and Milton all answer the essential question “What is the heart” in a distinct and telling way, which reflect their theological and scientific beliefs. Herbert changes the question to “What is man’s purpose?” because his dualistic beliefs do not allow him to formulate one answer for what he believes to be both a physical and spiritual question. He thus chooses to answer his newly formulated question in purely spiritual terms: man’s sole purpose is to serve and love God. When faced with the question “What is the heart?” Donne provides two distinct answers that he purposefully chooses not to reconcile: the physical heart is a material organ that pumps blood and the spiritual heart communicates with God. Like Herbert, Donne’s dualistic belief frames his answer, but unlike Herbert, Donne does not choose to overwrite the physical with the spiritual. Donne delights in not knowing how to harmonize his two answers and celebrates his ignorance. Milton’s answer to the question “What is the heart” is based in his monistic beliefs. The heart is at the same time a physical and spiritual place where physical life originates and God’s Spirit engraves the most lasting text. Milton does not separate the physical and spiritual worlds, just as he does not separate the anatomical, philosophical, economic, and theological debates concerning the heart: he chooses to meld them together to more powerfully

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<sup>5</sup> While Herbert and Donne predate Descartes’s formal theory of Dualism, I use the term when referring to Donne and Herbert because they believe that the material and spiritual worlds are distinct.

accentuate the heart as the core of man. While the nuances of how each of these three poets describe the heart reflect their specific convictions, each poet remain steadfast in Augustine's belief that "[God] movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee" (*Confessions* 352).

## CHAPTER TWO

### HEART AND BODY: “THOUGH ELEMENTS CHANGE . . . KEEP A STANDING MAJESTY IN ME”

Knowst thou how blood, which to the hart doth flow,  
Doth from one ventricle to th'other go?

. . . .

Know not the least things, which for our use bee?

(John Donne, “Of the Progress of the Soule,  
The Second Anniversarie,” I. 271-2, 280)

In 1611, John Donne in “Of the Progress of the Soule” raises a cutting-edge anatomical question: how does blood flow from one side of the heart to the other? Before the seventeenth century, anatomists failed to understand the answer to this question. Our modern understanding of blood circulation began in the seventeenth century with William Harvey’s innovative research and discoveries. Before Harvey, Galen argued that blood was continually made in the liver, transported through the septum, used by other organs, and then allowed to seep out into the air.<sup>6</sup> Through detailed anatomical experiments, Harvey concluded that Galen’s practically sacred theories were incorrect and determined that blood did not seep through the septum, but rather circulated through the lungs, out to the extremities, and then back to the heart. Harvey’s research further demonstrated that blood moved according to the forceful systole, or contraction, of the heart rather than the diastole, or expansion, of the heart. In the “Progress of the Soule” and many

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Burton, in his theory of spirits, also includes contradictory references to the heart just prior to Harvey’s publication: “The natural are begotten in the liver, and thence dispersed through the veins ... The vital spirits are made in the heart... The animal spirits formed the vital, brought up to the brain, and diffused by the nerves, to the subordinate members, give sense and motion to them all” (*Anatomy of Melancholy* 1.1.2.2).

other works, Donne struggles to understand complex functions of the heart that even the most respected scientists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries debated. Not only is Donne knowledgeable about such anatomical theories, but he incorporates specific details concerning ventricles, veins, and arteries in his works. Nonetheless, Donne ultimately denounces human understanding and argues that man will only understand the complexities of the body once he is in heaven: “In heaven thou straight know’st all, concerning it, / And what concernes it not, shalt straight forget” (299-300). Although Donne insists on the limitations of human understanding while on earth, he repeatedly returns to questions raised by new anatomical research, including the purpose of veins and the rhythms of the heart. Why do anatomical questions concerning the heart frequent not only Donne’s poems, meditations, and sermons, but also the works of George Herbert and John Milton, theological poets all writing in the seventeenth century? This chapter explores one reason the heart is central to these poets: Donne, Herbert, and Milton live at the historical moment when the true understanding of how the heart functions is recognized by anatomists. In spite of the new research there remained serious questions about the heart among scientists and these disagreements are reflected in diverse poetic responses to the heart. During the seventeenth century, the dispensation that saw the liver as the primary organ in the body, as well as the dispensation that sought to enthrone the brain as the primary organ, are in play with yet a third movement that bestows primacy on the heart. Harvey, Donne, Herbert, and Milton belonged to this third movement, and they share a rhetoric that attempts to understand the heart’s place within the anatomical body (science), the body politic (philosophy), the book as a body (economics), and the body of the church (theology). This chapter investigates the intersection of anatomy and poetry in the seventeenth century and explores why Donne and Herbert incorporate specific anatomical descriptions of the heart only to question and sometimes dismiss human

understanding, while Milton more consistently embraces anatomical theories and strives to fuse new discoveries with his evolving theology.

The lives and writings of Harvey and Donne overlap in so many ways that it is hard to imagine the two prominent men not interacting. Even a cursory reading of Donne's works show that Donne was fascinated with the materiality of the body, but a close examination of Donne's works alongside Harvey's theories reveals striking similarities. The two men's lives also reveal the strong likelihood that Donne not only knew of Harvey's theories but in all probability also attended his lectures and anatomical dissections. When Donne was two years old, his mother married John Syminges, the president of the College of Physicians. Harvey later held the same position: he was the president of the College of Physicians and a member from 1604-1656. Additionally, Harvey was the Royal Physician of James I beginning in 1618, Royal Physician to Charles I from 1632-1649, and a prominent scholar in London whose theories not only were well-known in England during the seventeenth century, but widely disseminated throughout the continent. Donne was the Royal Chaplain in 1615, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1621, and Royal Chaplain to Charles I starting in 1625, which would have placed Harvey and Donne in the same environment and interacting with the same influential men for several decades.

With his stepfather holding a prominent medical position, the young Donne came into contact with many leading physicians and anatomists and likely enjoyed reading the various medical texts that filled his stepfather's home library (Poynter 234). While Donne was growing up, the full committee for the College of Physicians met at his home on at least three occasions.<sup>7</sup> It is easy to imagine the curious young poet listening in on the College of Physician members passionately discussing anatomical research in his living room. As a young boy, Donne was

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<sup>7</sup> When Donne was ten years old, the Committee for the College of Physicians signed at his home the legal document founding the Lumleian Lectures—the post William Harvey filled starting in 1615 (Poynter 234).

likely fascinated by debates concerning the dissection of animals, how organs worked inside the body, and why human bodies function in specific ways, cultivating anatomical queries that would eventually blossom in his future writings. When Donne was twelve years old, his family moved to the precincts of St. Bartholomew's Hospital; here Donne literally lived in the shadows of the hospital where William Harvey would work for over four decades. After completing his studies, Donne returned to London in 1610 and was appointed a Royal Chaplain in 1615, the same year Harvey was appointed to give anatomical lectures for the College of Physicians.<sup>8</sup>

From 1616 to 1656 on most Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 to 11 a.m., Harvey lectured and provided surgical demonstrations on human and animal cadavers in the College of Physicians quarters in Amen Corner, just west of St. Paul's Cathedral (Shackelford 41). Donne, an avid reader, thinker, preacher, and writer, living in London and working as the King's Royal Chaplain and the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, surely must have entered the anatomical theater in Amen Corner, listened to Harvey's lectures, and witnessed the "ocular demonstrations." Donne would have needed only to walk a few steps to hear and observe Harvey's innovative lectures on topics that must have fascinated him since childhood. Public dissections were not only open to physicians, but they were considered a social event for non-medical witnesses, often drawing inquisitive individuals who wanted to learn more about the human body (Shackelford 29). On some occasions, admission was charged to enter anatomical theaters that were designed much like the permanent London playhouses and constructed less than twenty years after their theatrical counterparts (Shackelford 29). It is quite likely Donne stood in one of the raised elliptical tiers in the Amen Corner anatomical theater and intently watched the dissection of

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<sup>8</sup> The College of Physicians moved from Linacre's house on Knight Rider-Street to a house and premises at the end of Paternoster-row, in Amen Corner in 1614. The new location was leased from St Paul's Church. The first meeting in the new college was on August 23, 1614. On the premises a botanical garden and an anatomical theater was built. Harvey was nominated to the Lumleian lectureship in August 1615 (Munk 322).

human and animal bodies on the central, stage-like table below while listening to Harvey discuss the function of the heart and the circulation of blood. One can even imagine Harvey, with his demonstration rod in hand, walking towards the prominent preacher, Royal Chaplain to the King, and fellow writer sitting in his audience, and asking “What is the function of the human heart and how can we understand its purpose when we watch the blood flow through the body? What is the pulsific force that resonates from the heart of men and causes the heart to change in color and consistency? Is the liver, as Galen has preached, the principle organ in the body or is the heart in fact the central organ that produces and distributes blood in a closed circuit? Is Galen’s theory that the heart is the strongest organ in the body accurate or is the human heart, a more sensitive organ that is prone to disease and infection, the core of man? Is the heart of man filled with a distinct vital warmth that differentiates it from the heart of animals?”

While the loss of records, largely due to the Great Fire in 1666, make it impossible to know the details of their relationship, it is hard to imagine that these two progressively thinking lecturers and writers, working in the same corner of London in the early sixteenth century, the Royal Chaplain to the king and the Royal Physician to the King, individuals who cared for the physical and spiritual health of the same man, would have not read, listened to, and have been interested in each other’s work. Both Harvey and Donne discuss the same anatomical details in their writings when it was uncustomary to do so. They both ponder how the blood flows through the body, how veins and arteries function, and how the heart is the king of the body. Additionally, Harvey and Donne both overturn Galen’s millennium-old theory that the heart was the strongest organ in the body, disagreeing with Galen that “the heart is a hard flesh, not easily injured. In hardness, tension, general strength, and resistance to injury, the fibers of the heart far



surpass all others” (293). Both men acutely examine how the heart functions in order to better understand not only the physical body of man but also the metaphysical nature of the heart.

But Donne was not the only seventeenth-century English poet who demonstrated a serious understanding of Harvey’s medical research. The lives and writings of Herbert and Milton also intersect in curious ways with those of Harvey, and their works repeatedly concern themselves with the function and importance of the heart. Literary critics are quick to analyze the relationships between the three poets’ works; however, critics overlook that Harvey’s lectures and treatises are an important part of the foundation on which these poets are building.<sup>9</sup> We need to remember Donne’s telling meditation that “no man is an island” and dissect more closely how the poetry and theologies of these prominent English poets intersect with the writings of one of the most influential English anatomists. This chapter explores the various ways these three poets conceptualize the heart in light of the changes in anatomy, stimulated by Harvey’s revolutionary theories, and shows how the advances in anatomy created varied aesthetic responses that reflect each poet’s evolving theology. These poets were responding to and writing about a controversial and shifting subject that held religious, political, and physical meaning. Herbert and Donne incorporate the changes in science only to eventually insist on the insufficiency of human understanding: only God can understand such complexities. Milton, however, signals a shift in thinking when he embraces the ambiguities science presents and uses

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<sup>9</sup> Achsah Guibbory in *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) examines the cultural significance of religious conflict in the seventeenth century and shows how imaginative literature functioned in this conflict, but Guibbory does not discuss the importance of William Harvey’s discoveries. Barbara Lewalski in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979) argues that an extensive and widely accessible body of literary theory, chiefly pertaining to the Bible and to fundamental Protestant assumptions about the spiritual life and about art, can be extrapolated from such sixteenth- and seventeenth-century materials as biblical commentaries, rhetorical handbooks, poetic paraphrases of scriptures, emblem books, and manuals on meditation and preaching; however, she does not investigate the importance of the medical treatises of Harvey.

those ambiguities to search diligently for a truth that combines scientific discovery and metaphysical belief.

While the physical body and inward beliefs may seem distinctly different to twenty-first-century critics, in early modern England the physical and spiritual bodies were much more intertwined. Michael Schoenfeldt aptly describes this in *Body and Selves in Early Modern England*:

Whereas our post-Cartesian ontology imagines psychological inwardness and physiological materialism as necessarily separate realms of existence, and thus renders corporeal language for emotion highly metaphorical, the Galenic regime of the humoral self that supplies these [early modern English] writers with much of their vocabulary of inwardness demanded the invasion of social and psychological realms by biological and environmental processes. (8)

The three seventeenth-century theological poets I examine wrestle, in intertwined metaphysical and physical terms, with the evolving understanding of the heart in Harvey's scientific treatises. Examining how these poets understood the heart matters because, for them, science was interconnected with their religious and political beliefs. Advances in science related to a holistic system that ran in parallel with religious and political systems: each system had to work in concert with the other systems. For example, Copernicus's theory of heliocentrism, published in 1543, was highly scrutinized not only according to astronomical and mathematical thinking but also according to religious and political theories. Rethinking the structure of the solar system had to be evaluated according to what the Holy Scriptures said concerning the location of the Earth and the Sun. Additionally, new scientific theories could not contradict fundamental political theories concerning the organization of government and the power of the king. Harvey and other scientists, as well as poets such as Milton, double-checked scientific theories by holding them up against political and religious beliefs. As we will see later with Harvey's mid-century treatises, if the science did not make sense alongside of the other systems, scientists

often re-evaluated their research. John Rogers explains: “Both political and natural philosophy functioned as inextricably intertwined literary practices in seventeenth-century intellectual culture, a culture that demanded the construction of theories of agency and organization that could be seen to hold true for all facets of human and natural existence” (3). Understanding the changes in how seventeenth-century scientists describe the heart, therefore, is paramount to understanding contemporary religious, political, and aesthetic debates.

#### HARVEY’S TREATISE *ON THE MOTION OF THE HEART AND THE BLOOD* (1628)

Published and widely distributed in 1628, Harvey’s treatise “*Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus*” is a detailed account of Harvey’s experiments demonstrating that blood circulates throughout the body rather than being created in the liver. Harvey began his experiments and lectures about the circulation of blood many years before 1628; however, he waited to publish his findings until he had ample research to support his progressive ideas. In the introductory letter to the treatise, Harvey reminds Doctor Argent, president of the Royal College of Physicians,

I have already and repeatedly presented you, my learned friends, with my new views of the motion and function of the heart, in my anatomical lectures; but having now for more than nine years confirmed these views by multiplied demonstrations in your presence, illustrated them by arguments, and freed them from the objections of the most learned and skillful anatomists, I at length yield to the requests, I might say entreaties, of many, and here present them for general consideration in this treatise. (5)

As the Lumleian Lecturer for the College of Physicians, Harvey’s bi-weekly lectures and “ocular demonstrations” of his anatomical findings undeniably spurred many conversations in the English court and throughout London. His public lectures also provided him a platform to discuss questions such as “why veins were larger nearer the heart, when they were thought to

originate in the liver, or why the ‘vein’ that served the lungs seemed much too large to be merely providing nourishment and, moreover, had a structure more like an artery than a vein” (43).

Questions like these led Harvey to rethink the function of the heart and likely spurred contemporary poets to ask similar questions.

Published in Frankfort in 1628, Harvey’s Latin treatise was widely read and debated throughout the seventeenth century:

It is doubtless that it might be more easily disseminated over the Continent. It made a sensation among the learned of all countries. Its conclusions were opposed by the older physicians; but by the younger scientific men it was by no means received with disfavor. (Unnamed editor of 1908 edition of Harvey’s treatise, xvi)

As one would expect, Harvey’s findings were not immediately accepted, although by the mid-seventeenth century they had gained general approval: “Twas believed by the vulgar that he was crackbrained, and all the physitians were against him, with much adoe at last in about 20 or 30 years time it was received in all the universities in the world” (Unnamed editor of 1908 edition of Harvey’s treatise, xvii). Harvey’s treatise generated a new way of thinking about the heart; however, just as we will see in the varied descriptions of the heart in seventeenth-century poetry, there was a varied response in the medical field to Harvey’s findings. Steven Lubitz explains that many proponents agreed with Harvey’s theory largely because of the logic of his argument and his use of experimentation and quantitative methods. However, some proponents agreed for religious, mystical and philosophical reasons, while some were convinced only because of the change in public opinion with time. Many opposed the circulation theory due to “their rigid commitment to ancient doctrines, the questionable utility of experimentation, the lack of proof that capillaries exist, and a failure to recognize the clinical applications of his theory. Other opponents were motivated by personal resentments and professional ‘territorialism’” (Lubitz

274).<sup>10</sup> William Slights documents how even Harvey's Royal Society colleagues published refutations. Nevertheless, with time, Harvey's theory revolutionized the study of anatomy. Thomas Hobbes writes in his book *de Corpore*, "Harvey is the only man perhaps that ever lived to see his own doctrine established in his lifetime" (Aubrey 383). Harvey's 1628 treatise is considered today to be the most important textbook in the history of medicine and has made Harvey familiar to most modern physicians as one of the pioneers of modern medicine (Shackelford 45).

### HOW HARVEY'S THEORY IS DIFFERENT

While Harvey is credited with being the first to describe how blood circulates, he was primarily interested in investigating the essential *functions* of the heart (French 109). The fact that the blood circulated throughout the body was not the crux: he "was concerned instead with what he imagined to be the agency, or force, that lay behind the blood's circular motion" (Curtis 98). Harvey's desire to understand the function of the heart as well as the force that causes the blood to move parallels the poets' desires to understand the spiritual nature of the heart and how God was thought either to control human hearts or communicate with believers through the heart. Harvey did not believe the heart was merely a mechanical pump; he argued that there was a "pulsific faculty" of the heart that created movement (150). Harvey further maintained that the blood contained a type of mystic "vital principle," a type of heat or spirit imbued with life and force.<sup>11</sup> Even though Harvey's treatise was remarkably free of religious speculations, his

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<sup>10</sup> Roger French examines the responses to Harvey's 1628 treatise by contemporary physicians, natural philosophers, and anatomists in Britain and the continent.

<sup>11</sup> Harvey believed in Infusion Theory, which holds that souls are not made from human generation but are created by God from nothing—from no pre-existent human substances or materials. Infusionism is the opposite of Traducianism, which is the theory that the soul is formed inside the body through propagation from parents. In Infusion Theory, the soul is not related in substance to the flesh it inhabits, a belief Donne generally endorses. It is also important to remember that during the seventeenth century the Vitalist Movement, which attempts to explain

writings and public autopsies generated theological questions and spurred religiously minded poets to investigate how the advances in science could fit with their religious beliefs.

Shackelford explains that Harvey's work suited non-medical purposes such as "Christian philosophical and religious speculation about what it means to be human and how one might better understand the nature of the Creator (God) by examining the creature that he created in his own image, as the Christian Bible taught" (87). Harvey's lectures and treatise influenced not only how physicians understood the body but also how contemporary poets contemplated the body, religion, and even politics.

While Herbert, the former Cambridge University Orator and Member of Parliament turned country parson, incorporates references to changes in science in his works, his references to anatomy are overshadowed, and often overturned, by his spiritual ideology. While Herbert reveals through his works a seriously questioning mind pushing against the theological envelope of the Church of England, Herbert often privileges religion over science. Herbert's *The Temple*, published posthumously in 1633, incorporates references to changes in how human anatomy was understood, but even after he incorporates anatomical concepts in his writings, he ultimately reverts to spiritual answers.<sup>12</sup> He examines the complexities of the body and heart to then undermine those complexities with a belief that spiritual answers are more important than scientific ones. Herbert yearns for a spiritual "clasping of hands" with his Maker rather than an

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the relationship between the body and soul, was prominent: "The philosophy of Vitalism, known also as animist materialism, holds in its tamest manifestation the inseparability of body and soul and, in its boldest, the infusion of all material substance with the power of reason and self-motion" (Rogers 1). "Vitalism, banishing the centralizing logics of Calvinism and mechanism alike, secured into the fabric of the physical world a general scheme of individual agency and decentralization that we can identify as a protoliberalism" (Rogers 12). For a further discussion of this see John Henry, "The Matter of Souls: Medical Theory and Theology in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Roger French and Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) pp. 87-113; and Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers*, pp. 79-110. Fallon argues that "At a historical moment in which Calvinist theology and Hobbesian philosophy seems to lead inexorably to a crippling constraint on human freedom, the vitalist dream of material self-determination could function as an ontological justification of the philosophy of free will" (96).

<sup>12</sup> Harvey's theories would have been known to Herbert who was a fellow at Cambridge starting in 1616, Public Orator at Cambridge from 1620-28, and elected to Parliament in 1624.

understanding of exactly how the body and soul work together. In “The Temper II,” Herbert asks, “Where is that mighty joy / Which just now took up all my heart?” (1-2). Herbert longs to know the location of the joy that was once in his heart while simultaneously asking how joy can “take up” or “seize and occupy” all of his heart (*OED* “take up” def 1). Herbert thinks of the heart as a vessel that can be occupied in both a physical and spiritual way, yet he often chooses to retreat to spiritual answers that separate the physical and spiritual worlds. Just as he fled court life to become a country parson, Herbert moves away from purely scientific answers and privileges a dependence upon God’s sovereignty rather than a desire to completely incorporate the evolving science into his theology. Nonetheless, I do not wish to oversimplify Herbert’s striving to understand both religion and science, for his poetry clearly shows a struggle to comprehend both; however, when compared with Milton and his monist beliefs, Herbert emphasized scientific reasoning much less. Herbert, Donne, and Milton all respond to questions concerning the heart in complex, multi-faceted ways, but when placed along a continuum with each other, Herbert is less willing to intertwine his religious and scientific beliefs compared with Milton.

In the next stanza of “Temper II,” Herbert admits that “The grosser world stands to thy word and art” and comes to realize that “Though elements change, and heaven move, / Let not thy higher Court remove / But keep a standing Majesty in me” (14-16). Herbert acknowledges that both the world and human understanding of that world through science and anatomy is changing. Yet, Herbert proclaims that just as God’s “word and art” does not take orders from the “grosser world,” he will not bend to contemporary changes; he will steadfastly follow his God who can make all vicissitudes in science “bend” to Him. God’s “higher Court” transcends scientific revolutions taking place inside the English court. Herbert’s straight-forward response

to the seventeenth-century debate concerning the heart is to insist that no matter what alters around him, his heart—which is not a lifeless pump void of feelings and beliefs—bends to God.

In “Easter,” Herbert further petitions God:

Oh smooth my rugged heart, and there  
Engrave thy rev’rend law and fear;  
Or make a new one, since the old  
Is saplesse grown,  
And a much fitter stone  
To hide my dust, then thee to hold. (13-18)

Herbert initially yearns for God to intervene and “smooth out” his imperfect heart, but he then replaces his first request by asking God simply to make him a new heart. He testifies that his physical heart “Is saplesse grown, / And a much fitter stone” for his tombstone rather than a living sacrifice to God, accentuating his dualistic belief that his physical heart is distinct from his spiritual heart. Unlike Milton, who wrestles to make science rationally fit with his theology, or Donne, who revels in the unknown, Herbert enters the scientific conversation to then retreat to the comfort that God transcends the complexities that occupy man. Herbert, more removed from Harvey’s theories when compared with Donne and Milton, moves away from science when it appears to him that science and his metaphysical beliefs conflict. Nevertheless, Herbert does enter the scientific conversation and struggles with complicated questions such as how venom can “fume and work” in his heart and “turn [his soul] to bubbles straight / and thence by kind, / Vanish into a wind” (“Nature” 8-11). Herbert, aware of the changes in anatomy, ultimately surrenders to God whereas Donne purposefully lingers in the struggles and Milton searches to answer the intellectual challenge more directly by melding science and religion through his belief in monism.

In *The Country Parson*, Herbert instructs parsons to choose “texts of Devotion, not Controversie” (22). Moreover, he advises that “if there be any of his parish that hold strange



Doctrines, useth all possible diligence to reduce them to the common Faith” (95). Herbert, unlike Harvey, Donne, and Milton, avoids controversy and aims to “refine people” to common beliefs. In his 1628 introduction, Harvey asserts a notably opposite approach:

For true philosophers, who are only eager for truth and knowledge, never regard themselves as already so thoroughly informed, but that they welcome further information from whomsoever and from whencesoever it may come; nor are they so narrow-minded as to imagine any of the arts of sciences transmitted to us by the ancients, in such a state of forwardness or completeness, that nothing is left for the ingenuity and industry of others. (6)

Harvey embraces differences that challenge him to investigate scientific mysteries, which in turn, creates new ways of understanding, while Herbert searches to avoid differences in theology that cause division among believers as much as possible. Herbert, writing his spiritual poems away from court life and the mounting force of the scientific revolution, enjoys a dependence on his creator which ultimately supersedes his desire to engage more directly in what he believes to be enigmatic scientific debates.

Harvey’s theory that blood did not seep through the septum, but rather circulated through the lungs, out to the extremities, and then back to the heart, allowed for a specific circular path of conservation not previously imagined in anatomy. As we will see, this theme of cyclical movements frequents the contemporary poetry of Donne and Milton. Harvey also argued that the heart’s core operation was to pump blood upon contracting, or what he called “the forceful systole” (26). Prior to Harvey, it was assumed that a person’s pulse was created by the forceful movement of the heart hitting the chest as it expanded (diastole). Harvey reversed this theory and argued that the constriction (systole) of the heart was what caused the pulse:

Hence the very opposite of the opinions commonly received appears to be true; inasmuch as it is generally believed that when the heart strikes the breast and the pulse is felt without, the heart is dilated in its ventricles and is filled with blood; but the contrary of this is the fact, and the heart, when it contracts (and the impulse of the apex is conveyed through the chest wall), is emptied. Whence the

motion which is generally regarded as the diastole of the heart, is in truth its systole. And in like manner the intrinsic motion of the heart is not the diastole but the systole; neither is it in the diastole that the heart grows firm and tense, but in the systole, for then only, when tense, is it moved and made vigorous. (26)

While this reversal may not seem crucial to modern readers, Harvey's scientific discovery suggests a seventeenth-century poetic rhetoric in which hearts must be constricted, battered, crushed, and quelled by God. In *The Country Parson*, Herbert explains that the "benefit of affliction" is that "it works the stubborn heart of man" (59). Emphasizing pressure on the heart rather than a filling of the heart, Herbert highlights constriction as the motion that pushes God's spirit throughout the body and vitalizes man. Herbert pleads for God to empty him of his sinful humanity and then forcefully refill him with God's spirit and warmth. Similarly in "The Pulley," Herbert accentuates that man only understands his dependence on God when he is first incomplete; Herbert emphasizes man's need to be empty and lacking a key component rather than being satisfied and filled through his own power. For Herbert, satisfaction only comes after affliction, which is the force that allows God's spirit to circulate throughout the body.

In his famous sonnet, Donne commands God to "Batter my heart . . . O'erthrow me, and bend / Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new . . . For I, Except you enthrall me, never shall be free" (1, 3-4, 13). Donne asks for God to "batter" his heart, which literally means he wants his heart "subjected to heavy crushing and constricting" (*OED* "batter" def 3). In addition, he wants God to "enthrall" him, meaning "to bring into bondage" and constrict with systolic pressure (*OED* "enthrall" def 1). Donne yearns for God to be the force that imprisons and compresses his heart so that he can be free. He does not ask for a filling of his heart but rather pleads for constriction to empty him of human frailty. He is yearning for God to vitalize him through a forceful systolic circulation that begins with the crushing of his heart. In the Scriptures, the psalmist speaks of the freedom Donne longs for, but emphasizes that he yearns

for God to enlarge his heart rather than constrict it: “I will run the course of your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart” (119:32). The psalmist uses the word “rachab,” meaning “broaden, make room, open wide,” which contradicts how the poets in the seventeenth century ask for their hearts to be compressed (*Strong’s Concordance* def “rachab”).

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton emphasizes man’s need for his heart to be constricted, forcefully emptied, and then vitalized by God’s Spirit when he mocks Satan’s swelled heart: “His heart/ Distends with pride, and hardening in his strength” (1.571-2). Satan’s heart expands with pride and grows harder, while the correct movement of the heart is to give obedience to God and have a deflated, submissive heart that is emptied of sin, like the “Bright-harnest Angels [who] sit in order serviceable” at the end of Milton’s “Nativity Ode,” awaiting God’s vitalizing warmth (244). According to Harvey, Herbert, Donne, and Milton, God’s empowering warmth and the heart’s power comes in constriction, not expansion, for the constriction generates circulation and life. Later in *Paradise Lost*, after the angels Ithuriel and Zephon confront the whispering Satan who has been “assaying . . . The Organs of [Eve’s] fancy” and “inspiring venom” to “taint the animal spirits that from her pure blood arise,” Milton explains how even Satan does not control all the functions and responses of his heart:

The Fiend replid not, overcome with rage;  
But like a proud Steed reind, went hautie on,  
Chaumping his iron curb: to strive or flie  
He held it vain; awe from above had quelld  
His heart, not else dismai’d. (4.857-61)

Satan learns he cannot fight the “awe from above” that “quelled his heart”—a heart which was once bloated with pride. By using *quelled* here, meaning “crushed,” Milton emphasizes the need for a constricted heart (*OED*, “*Quelled*” def 1).<sup>13</sup> Satan’s heart is now forcefully brought to a

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<sup>13</sup> Milton uses the word *quelled* in a similar way in *Tetrachordan* (1645): “The want of this quells them to a servile sense of their own conscious unworthinesse.”

humble state of compression that God's awe commands, which thus echoes back to Harvey's assertion that the heart's core operation hinges on a "forceful systole" (150). Satan, unlike the worshipping angels in the "Nativity Ode," does not choose to submit; nevertheless, God's power still quells Satan's heart momentarily, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the heart as the location in the body where obedience must begin.

In his 1628 treatise, Harvey furthermore asserts that the color of the heart changes as the heart moves: "It may further be observed in fishes, and the colder blooded animals, such as frogs, serpents, etc., that the heart, when it moves, becomes of a paler color, when quiescent of a deeper blood-red color" (25). Harvey is the first to document through experiments how and why the blood flowing away from the heart is red and the blood traveling back to the heart is blue. By draining all of the blood out of different animals, while keeping the red and blue blood separate, Harvey showed that, after the blue blood was allowed to sit in the open air, it would change to the same color red as the other blood that was traveling from the heart. His experiments centered on the color of blood—experiments that he conducted during his public dissections many years before his publication of his treatise—may have stirred Donne to ponder the same question in "Of the Progresse of the Soule" (1612):

And yet one watches, starves, freese, and sweats,  
To know but Catechismes and Alphabets  
Of unconcerning things, matters of fact;  
What Caesar did, yea, and what Cicero said.  
Why grasse is greene, or why our blood is red,  
Are mysteries which none have reach'd unto.  
In this low forme, poore soul, what wilt thou doe?  
When wilt thou shake this Pedanterie,  
Of being taught by sense, and Fantasie? (274-82)

Donne asks “why our blood is red” and suggests that hitherto “none have reach’d unto” this mystery; however, Harvey is asking this exact question at this time.<sup>14</sup> Is it not probable that Harvey and Donne, as well as other seventeenth-century writers, are discussing the same questions because they are all striving to understand the scientific changes occurring before their eyes?

#### HEART AND KING: HARVEY’S 1628 INTRODUCTION AND DONNE’S “MEDITATION XI”

In his anatomical treatise describing complex experiments concerning the functions of the heart, Harvey emphasizes that the king is the foundation of life, the fountain from which life flows, and the physical center of the country. In addition to the letter to Doctor Argent discussed earlier, in his 1628 treatise Harvey includes a related introductory letter to King Charles I which asserts that the heart is the center of the body just as the king is the center of the country:

The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them, the sun of their microcosm, that upon which all growth depends, from which all power proceeds. The King, in like manner, is the foundation of his kingdom, the sun of the world around him, the heart of the republic, the fountain whence all power, all grace doth flow. (3)

This letter demonstrates how Harvey connects his anatomical findings with politics; for Harvey, understanding the heart’s role in the body not only was related to other scientific discoveries, such as Copernicus’s theory of heliocentrism introduced in 1543 in his *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, but also interconnected with the king’s role as the center of the country.

Harvey asserts that, like the heart, the king is the source of power, life, and grace for the larger

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<sup>14</sup> In the opening line of “A Jet Set Ring,” Donne explains how his heart is black. In “Elegy XIII,” Donne laments his “pale inwards, and thy panting heart” (54). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton contemplates “pure blood” in contrast to tainted blood (1.805). Donne and Milton question not only the functions of the heart but also ask questions concerning the color and consistency of the heart and blood, which suggests they are aware of contemporary scientific debates.

country. As the sun holds the central position in the universe while providing stability, warmth, and light, both the heart and the king hold the central position in their universe while providing authority, nourishment, and direction for the larger body. Without the heart, life would cease in the body; without the king, life would cease in the country.

In his letter Harvey adds, “Many things in a King are after the pattern of the heart,” directly claiming that specific qualities in a king follow the structure and organization of not just the body but the physical organ of the heart. Harvey does not assert that the king is like the liver or even the brain, which could have been appropriate comparisons in the seventeenth century. According to the Galenic model, the liver was the source of life and blood, and the brain was commonly connected with human reason. Moreover, Harvey emphasizes that the qualities and power of the king follow not just a metaphysical understanding of the heart but the actual structure and patterns of the organ. The physical size, location, strength, and function of the heart, as well as the sprawling veins and arteries networked throughout the body, correlate with the king’s role as leader of the country. The king represents the central organ that pumps nutrients to the rest of the body in order to sustain and govern it. If the heart is diseased, the entire body is subject to disease. If the heart is healthy, the entire body benefits. In related language, Donne preached at Paul’s Cross in 1616: “The heart is the fountain from which my good and holy purpose flow,” paralleling Harvey’s assertion that the heart is the fountain and source of life (3).

In his letter to the king, Harvey argues that it is paramount for the king to understand how the body is physically constructed in order to help him rule:

The knowledge of his heart, therefore, will not be useless to a Prince, as embracing a kind of Divine example of his functions,—and it has still been usual with men to compare small things with great. Here, at all events, best of Princes, placed as you are on the pinnacle of human affairs, you may at once contemplate

the prime mover in the body of man, and the emblem of your own sovereign power. (3)

Harvey claims the king can apprehend a physical example of his divine calling if he understands the anatomical details concerning the heart. In a way, studying anatomy is the king's guidebook for ruling and a physical medium which can be used to better understand God and how God has ordered the world. When he explains that the king is placed "on the pinnacle of human affairs," Harvey employs a metaphor, a standard tool of poetry, in his scientific treatise.<sup>15</sup> Not only do the poets incorporate scientific language and theories in their works, Harvey utilizes poetic devices in his scientific treaties, illustrating that both poets and scientists employ common tools and concepts familiar to the other group.

Harvey emphasizes the twofold benefit of reading his treatise: It allows the king, and by extension all mankind, to "contemplate the prime mover in the body of man," and it bolsters the heart as the appropriate "emblem of [the king's] own sovereign power" (4). By using the phrase "prime mover" to describe the heart, Harvey draws on the singular and powerful status of the heart, the heart's function of giving and sustaining life, and the heart's connection to the ultimate "prime mover"—God. According to the *OED*, a "prime mover" is "A person who sets or keeps something in motion, specifically God, regarded as the motive force of the universe" (def 1).<sup>16</sup> In 1616, Shakespeare refers to the "first mover" in *Henry IV, part 2*: "Oh thou eternall mouer of the heauens," and in 1617, Bacon uses a similar phrase in his *Speech in Star-Chamber in Resuscitatio*: "Do therefore, as they [the planets] do; Move alwayes and be carried, with the Motion of your first Mover, which is your Sovereign" (3.3.19). Harvey incorporates the phrase

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<sup>15</sup> Harvey's description that the king is perched on "the pinnacle of human affairs" in order to "contemplate the prime mover in the body of man" can also be connected with Milton's later depiction of the Son perched on the temple pinnacle at the end of *Paradise Regained*.

<sup>16</sup> The prime mover is also connected with "The outermost of the concentric spheres in Aristotelian cosmology, which transmitted its motion to those spheres below it that carried the stars and planets" (primum mobile *OED* n. 1.) Mover also has court connotations: "A person who moves a proposition, proposal, etc., in a deliberative assembly (*OED*, def 4.)

“prime mover” in order to illuminate the heart’s connection with not only the king but also with a belief in one sovereign God who created and sustains the universe.

In the passage above, Harvey also describes the heart as “the emblem” of the king’s power, which simultaneously raises the status of the heart and the king while blurring the boundaries between the human body, the structure of government, and the Divine. In a medical treatise about a physical organ, Harvey still draws on the symbolic representation of the heart; furthermore, Harvey apprehends the heart through physical images such as the sun, the king, and an emblem. A decade earlier, Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning*, defines “emblem” as “one of the two parts of the ‘art of memory’ which reduceth conceits intellectual to images sensible” (1605, ii). The term “emblem” generates connections with English emblem books, and more specifically, *The School of the Heart* emblem books popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that showcase images of the heart undergoing various trials or enjoying blessings from God.<sup>17</sup> These books present the heart as a visual image undergoing the physical trials and blessings that represent spiritual lessons and growth. An emblem in the seventeenth century could have been an actual picture, such as those in the popular emblem books, or an abstract idea that symbolically represents an object, person, or even abstract quality. Harvey uses “emblem” here to emphasize the physicality of the human heart as well as the metaphysical status of the heart as a symbol and physical site of a man’s soul, just as Donne in “Hymn to Christ” also incorporates the term “emblem” to similarly meld the symbolic with the physical: “What sea soever swallow mee, that flood / Shall be to mee an embleme of thy blood” (3-4). Donne

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<sup>17</sup> An emblem in the sixteenth and seventeenth century typically had three parts: a motto, a symbolic picture, and an accompanying text. According to humanist theory, all elements of the emblem were essential, for the theory held that an image is a body without a soul if not accompanied by its sister, poetry. Emblems rested upon the assumption that hidden truths are ascertainable under the form of visible signs. Emblems were understood to be revelatory of hidden meanings, moral lessons, and divine truths. The invisible was assumed to be made manifest through the visible (Wright 104). Rosemary Freeman in “George Herbert and the Emblem Books” describes the vitality of the emblem book literary form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



imagines that if he were to drown in the sea, the water that overwhelms him will be both the cause of his death and the spiritual symbol of Christ's blood that provides his salvation. Early modern readers, especially poets, would have recognized Harvey's use of the word "emblem" to signal the interconnected nature of the physical and metaphysical worlds.

Written in 1624, four years before the publication of Harvey's treatise but during the same time as Harvey's Lumleian Lectures, Donne's "Meditation XI" addresses similar comparisons between the heart and a king:

Since the *Heart* hath the *birthright* and *Primogeniture*, and that it is *Natures eldest Sonne* in us, the part which is first borne to life in man, and that the other parts, as *younger brethren*, and servants in this family, have a dependence upon it, it is reason that the principall care hee had of it, though it bee not the strongest part; as the *eldest* is oftentimes not the strongest of the family. And since the *Braine*, and *Liver*, and *Heart*, hold not a *Triumvirate in Man*, a *Soveraigntie* equally shed upon them all, for his *well-being*, as the foure *Elements* doe, for his very *being*, but the *Heart* alone is in the *Principalitie*, and in the *Throne*, as *King*, the rest as *Subjects*, though in eminent *Place* and *Office*, must contribute to that, as *Children* to their *Parents*, as all persons to all kinds of *Superiours*, though oftentimes, those *Parents*, or those *Superiours*, bee not of stronger parts, than themselves, that serve and obey them that are weaker. (70)

According to Donne, all other parts of the body, including the liver and the brain, serve the heart, the "eldest son," and are dependent on it. This passage is quite similar to Harvey's closing ideas in his treatise as well:

The heart is the first part which exists, and that it contains within itself blood, life, sensation, and motion, before either the brain or the liver were created or had appeared distinctly, or, at all events, before they could perform any function. The heart, ready furnished with its proper organs of motion, like a kind of internal creature, existed before the body. The first to be formed, nature willed that it should afterwards fashion, nourish, preserve, complete the entire animal, as its work and dwelling-place: and as the prince in a kingdom, in whose hands lie the chief and highest authority, rules over all, the heart is the source and foundation from which all power is derived, on which all power depends in the animal body. (105)

Donne describes the heart as “the eldest son,” but Harvey sees the heart as “the first to be formed,” as that which “existed before the body.” Donne omits how the heart comes into being and describes the heart as an offspring of the body while Harvey argues that the heart exists before the body. For Harvey, the heart has the task to “fashion, nourish, preserve, complete, the entire animal”; the heart is the beginning of life and the ultimate core of man. Donne offers a similar, yet less radical description of the heart that demotes the heart to the eldest son rather than the first formed. Within his description of the heart, Donne retreats from Harvey’s Infusion Theory and signals a break from the belief that human life is created by God from nothing.<sup>18</sup> Donne promotes the sovereignty of the heart over other organs while simultaneously undermining the more traditional Infusion Theory.

Both Harvey and Donne argue that the heart is not the physically strongest part of the body. The heart is physically weaker and easily falls victim to poison and other ailments. For Donne and Harvey, physical dominance is not as important as the heart’s status as the “Principalitie.” Likewise, the king, while physically weaker than the larger body of people, is still sovereign. Both Harvey and Donne contradict Galen’s theory that the heart was the strongest organ in the body and highlight the heart’s physical weakness; yet, at the same time, they juxtapose the heart’s physical weakness with its sovereignty, in order to call attention more dramatically to its status as the principle organ and king of the body.

Donne, merging theories of anatomy and politics much like Harvey, emphasizes how the heart sits “in the Throne, as King” while the rest of the body are its subjects. Later in his meditation, Donne also notes, “this *King of man*, the *Heart*, which is also applyable to the Kings of this world,” further emphasizing the interconnectedness of the heart and king (44). Donne’s

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<sup>18</sup> See footnote 11 for a description of Infusion Theory. While not signaling a direct belief in either Infusion Theory or Traducianism, in a way, Donne is here perhaps unknowingly undermining Infusion Theory.

description of the heart is strikingly similar to Harvey's proclamation that "the heart is the sovereign of everything within him" just as "the king, in like manner, is the foundation of his kingdom, the sun of the world around him, the heart of the republic" (3). Later in his treatise, Harvey expands these ideas, adding that the heart, through its virtue and pulse, is the "household divinity" that "nourishes, cherishes, quickens the whole body," thus bringing action to an otherwise lifeless body:

The heart, consequently, is the beginning of life; the sun of the microcosm, even as the sun in his turn might well be designated the heart of the world; for it is the heart by whose virtue and pulse the blood is moved, perfected, and made nutrient, and is preserved from corruption and coagulation; it is the household divinity which, discharging its function, nourishes, cherishes, quickens the whole body, and is indeed the foundation of life, the source of all action. (57)

Harvey accentuates the heart's life-giving ability while connecting the heart's role to the king's role. This merging of the heart and the king thus bolsters both the heart's status in the body and the king's status in the country.

Donne continues in his meditation to emphasize the heart's supremacy over other organs:

For therefore doth the *Phisician*, intermit the present care of *Braine*, or *Liver*, because there is a possibilitie that they may subsist, though there bee not a present and a particular care had of them, but there is no possibilitie that they can subsist, if the *Heart* perish. ("Meditation XI," 2)

Donne explains how physicians cease to take care of a patient's brain or liver if the heart is in need of care. Assisting other organs when the most vital organ is in danger is futile. While Donne's language sounds fit for a medical journal, it is important to note that Donne's use of "Phisician" here also draws on the Christian belief that Christ is the chief physician who cares more about the health of a man's metaphysical soul—often thought to be housed in a man's heart—than the man's physical body. As a Christian poet writing devotional meditations, Donne prioritizes the health of the spiritual core of man over the physical shell of the larger body.

Saving a man's brain or liver will not physically heal a man if his heart is physically sick, just as saving a man's physical heart will not spiritually heal a man if his heart is spiritually dead.

According to both Harvey and Donne, the heart sustains and directs the larger body. In the Greek New Testament, the word often used for physician is derived from "iaomai," a word that refers to spiritual as well as physical healing. In Luke 4:23 and Matthew 9:23, Christ refers to himself as an "iaomai," or physician, which emphasizes his role as physician on two levels: a physician who healed the blind, lame, and diseased, as well as a physician who healed the spiritually sick; Christ was the physician who cared more about ministering to and healing hearts than healing bodies.

In the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, Milton similarly elevates the heart above other organs when he asserts that God's spirit prefers the heart over any other temple:

And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for Thou know'st. (1.17-9)

The word "temple" here connotes both an association with a religious place of worship and the physical body of a believer, just as the title of Herbert's collection of poems, *The Temple*, refers to both a place of worship and a believer's body.<sup>19</sup> Milton here emphasizes an "upright" and "pure" heart, further underscoring the spiritual health of the heart, which, unlike Donne and Herbert, he believes to be synonymous with the physical health of the heart.

In *The Country Parson*, Herbert explains, "the chief thing, which God in scripture requires, is the heart" (358). Herbert similarly asserts in his poem "Nature" that the heart must be tamed and purified of "venome" that can "fume and work" in the heart:

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<sup>19</sup> The *OED* defines "temple" as "Any place regarded as occupied by the divine presence; specifically the person or body of a Christian" (def 3.) In *Macbeth*, written in 1623, Shakespeare incorporates this meaning when he writes: "Most sacrilegious Murder hath broke ope The Lords anoynted Temple, and stole thence The Life o'th'Building" (ii. iii. 67).

O tame my heart  
...  
If thou shalt let this venome lurk,  
And in suggestions fume and work,  
My soul will turn to bubbles straight,  
And thence into a winde,  
Making thy workmanship deceit. (4, 7-11)

All four writers clearly delineate the heart's sovereignty, its status as the fountain of life, and its need to be pure. However, we must remember that these assertions concerning the heart were not widely accepted in the early seventeenth century. In *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, Galen explains, "The liver is the source of the veins and the principal instrument of sanguification" (221). For Galen and many living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the liver, not the heart, was still considered the warmest and moistest organ that most actively formed blood, and it was thus the fountain of life and purity. Harvey overturned these theories, which led poets such as Herbert, Donne, and Milton to accentuate the heart as not only the physical center and king of the body but also the spiritual core of man. Harvey's findings allowed the poets to combine their metaphysical beliefs with the new science. This fusion bolstered rather than undermined their belief that the heart is the ultimate physical and metaphysical essence of man.

In the conclusion of "Meditation XI," Donne again emphasizes the centrality of the heart, but, at the same time, accentuates the heart's small physical size and man's narrow understanding of the larger world:

How little of the world is the *Earth!* And yet that is all that *Man hath*, or *is*. How little of a *Man* is the *Heart*, and yet it is all, by which he *is*; and this continually subject, not only to forraine poysons, conveyed by others, but to intestine poysons, bred in ourselves by pestilentiaill sicknesses. O who, if before hee had a beeing, he could have sense of this miserie, would buy a being here upon these conditions? (74)

Donne's negativity resounds in this passage; he laments how little man understands on earth, yet he circuitously acknowledges that the heart, which is spiritually yoked to God, is the quintessence of man. The heart is the glimmer of hope of a more complete understanding of the divine that he believes he will only understand after death. On earth, the heart is "little" and subject to "poisons, bred in ourselves," but at the same time, the heart is "all by which [man] is." The heart is thus an imperfect, weak, and easily diseased center that rules and defines each man. The small physical size of the heart and its vulnerability to disease does not necessarily dethrone the heart as the king of man, but rather accentuates the power and importance of the heart when compared to the larger body.

Unlike Herbert who mainly asks questions about the purpose of the heart, Donne incorporates questions that investigate how the heart is anatomically understood. Donne questions how blood flows from one ventricle to the other, how vapors pass through the heart, and why the heart and blood are specific colors, which suggests that Donne more fully attempts to grapple with the new scientific discoveries. Donne uses his poetry as a place to speculate about things such as how the heart functions, what makes up the heart, how the blood circulates through the heart, and how the heart works in conjunction with veins and arteries. Donne quite frequently dwells on the separation of the body and soul in his writings, yearning for them one day to be united; however, how the physical body and the metaphysical soul can actually join is a mystery Donne embraces rather than something he shuns or actively tries to solve. For example, in "The Ecstasy," Donne suspends the moment when the two lovers lay like "sepulchral statues," and enjoys how their souls rest "As, 'twixt two equal armies, Fate / Suspends uncertain victory"

(16, 13-4). Donne enjoys the moments of not knowing and not understanding; he revels in the state of perplexing separation more than working towards any kind of resolution.<sup>20</sup>

At first, Harvey sounds like Donne and Herbert when he contends, “The motion of the heart was only to be comprehended by God,” but Harvey moves past this assumption and searches for answers grounded in meticulous research:

When I first gave my mind to vivisections, as a means of discovering the motions and uses of the heart, and sought to discover these from actual inspection, and not from the writings of others, I found the task so truly arduous, so full of difficulties, that I was almost tempted to think, with Fracastorius, that the motion of the heart was only to be comprehended by God. For I could neither rightly perceive at first when the systole and when the diastole took place, nor when and where dilatation and contraction occurred, by reason of the rapidity of the motion, which in many animals is accomplished in the twinkling of an eye, coming and going like a flash of lightning; so that the systole presented itself to me now from this point, now from that; the diastole the same; and then everything was reversed, the motions occurring, as it seemed, variously and confusedly together. My mind was therefore greatly unsettled nor did I know what I should myself conclude, nor what to believe from others. (22)

Harvey questions whether it is possible to understand how the heart functions. Nonetheless, Harvey continued his research and, when he was able to view how the heart and blood moved in dying animals, he was able to see more clearly how the heart functioned.

Donne never finds this confidence. As Ramie Targoff explains, Donne was uncertain not only about anatomical theories but also his salvation: “Unlike his near contemporary, George Herbert, Donne never claims in his poems to have heard God’s voice. He is also fundamentally uncertain about whether he is one of God’s chosen creatures” (107). In his poems, Donne is constantly searching and grasping for answers, but, unlike Herbert, Milton, and Harvey, Donne does not achieve certainty when it comes to understanding changing anatomical theories or acknowledging his personal salvation. His poems reverberate with a physical desperation as well

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<sup>20</sup> Ramie Targoff explains how the parting between body and soul is the great subject of Donne’s writing. She argues that throughout his works, Donne reveals his obsession with what connects, and what severs, the body and soul (2-7).

as a basking in the unreachable hope to meld the body and the soul. In “Holy Sonnet V,” Donne laments,

I am a little world made cunningly  
Of Elements, and an Angellike spright,  
But black sinne hath betraid to endless night  
My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die. (1-4)

Donne suggests that he is made up of both physical elements and a metaphysical spirit, but due to his dualistic beliefs, he concludes that “both parts must die.” Donne, when plagued with difficult questions, avoids resolution, and dwells in skepticism. He delights in the realization that he cannot resolve the mysteries of the physical and metaphysical worlds and is satisfied with not knowing every answer; Donne enjoys hovering on the brink of fatalism even when trying to escape.

Donne, like Herbert and Milton, struggles to understand the heart because he both believes his heart is the most refined example of who he is, and he is acutely aware of the unstable anatomical understanding of the heart in the seventeenth century. Like Herbert who struggles to understand the “shreds of holiness” piled in his soul and the minute “quintessence ... of the good extract of [his] heart,” Donne and Milton wrestle with understanding the heart in both anatomical and spiritual ways within the scientifically changing world around them (“The Sinner” 6, 9-10). Yet, how each poet contemplates the changes concerning the heart reveals insight about how they each conceptualize their relationship with God and their metaphysical beliefs: Herbert allows spiritual beliefs to overshadow any uncertainties he has concerning the melding of the physical and metaphysical worlds; Donne clings to a suspended, negative uncertainty as a space of ecstasy and inspiration; Milton, as we will see in chapter three, embraces ambiguities and uses the debate itself to perpetually move closer to a better understanding of the interconnectedness of the physical and metaphysical realms.



## HARVEY'S UNCONVENTIONAL THEORY OF THE CIRCULATION OF BLOOD

While Harvey disagreed with Galen's theories concerning the heart, Harvey accepted some of Aristotle's theories concerning the movement of blood; however, Harvey went beyond Aristotle's findings that blood continually moved and argued that blood moves in a closed circuit throughout the body. In light of this belief, Harvey attempted to quantify how much blood is in the body, a project earlier scientists did not attempt. The emergence of Harvey's findings may help explain why poets writing at this time were also questioning if and how the blood circulated, and how much blood was in the body. Donne asks, "Knowst thou how blood, which to the hart doth flow, / Doth from one ventricle to th'other go?" ("Of the Progress of the Soule" 271-2). Similarly, Herbert asks "O my chief good, / How shall I measure out thy blood?" ("Good Friday" 1-2). Milton also contemplates God the Father's "motions in [Adam], longer then they move, / His heart I know, how variable and vain / Self-left" (*PL* 11.91-3). The poets are all struggling to understand how and why the heart moves, as well as the quantity and circular path of the blood, all questions which likely evolved from Harvey's new experiments, lectures, and treatises.

In his writings, Harvey acknowledges that his theories contradicted long-standing ancient beliefs. He even adds that he fears that his theories will stir enemies against him; nonetheless, Harvey is determined to share what he believes to be an accurate understanding of the heart and the motion of the blood:

Thus far I have spoken of the passage of the blood from the veins into the arteries, and of the manner in which it is transmitted and distributed by the action of the heart; points to which some, moved either by the authority of Galen or Columbus, or the reasonings of others, will give in their adhesion. But what remains to be said upon the quantity and source of the blood which thus passes is of a character so novel and unheard-of that I not only fear injury to myself from the envy of a

few, but I tremble lest I have mankind at large for my enemies, so much doth wont and custom become a second nature. Doctrine once sown strikes deep its root, and respect for antiquity influences all men. Still the die is cast, and my trust is in my love of truth and the candour of cultivated minds. (55)

Harvey knows that his theories challenged long-standing beliefs, yet he is confident in his findings and, with the encouragement of some of his colleagues, he publishes multiple treatises documenting his extensive research. Like Milton, who is concerned with a “piecing together of Truth,” through “diligent research and free discussion,” Harvey is more concerned with ascertaining what he believes to be correct anatomical theories rather than upholding tradition (CD 78). Moreover, scientifically inquisitive poets like Donne and Milton accept Harvey’s findings because Harvey documents his research with detailed experiments that appeal to their longing for a scientific understanding of the body and because Harvey’s theories logically support their desire to centralize the heart and illuminate the life generating power of blood. Harvey’s progressive theories support the poets’ desire to showcase the heart, an organ often overshadowed by the liver in antiquity and an organ in the seventeenth century that is beginning to be suppressed by a movement to privilege the brain.<sup>21</sup> His findings also support the Judeo-Christian belief that the heart is the core of man and “the life of a creature is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11).

Harvey’s discovery that “it is a matter of necessity that the blood perform a circuit, that it return to whence it set out,” mirrors the poets’ emphasis on circular motion, not just in relation to cosmology or rain cycles, but motions inside the body (55). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton asserts that it is God’s motions dwelling inside man that create steady, efficient motions in man. God the Father proclaims, “My motions in him, / longer then they move, / His heart I know, how variable

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21 Eric Jager explains that in the seventeenth century, the heart is overshadowed by the brain because there is a move to value man’s autonomy, which is linked to the brain. Locke and Hume identified the self with the more mysterious workings of the brain once the heart was medically understood as a mere pump. Locating the core of a person in the mind emphasizes a move to a self-made soul (138-45).

and vain/ Self-left” (11.91-3). God the Father places his motions in Adam to direct his way from being “variable and vain.” Motions here point to the motions of Adam’s blood circulating throughout his body as well as the motions of the spirit that guide and direct Adam spiritually inside his heart. Because he incorporates terms commonly used by anatomists such as “motions,” “move,” and “heart,” Milton quite possibly wrestles here with incorporating Harvey’s advances in anatomy with his theology. Milton is working out for himself how Harvey’s progressive theories can run parallel with his metaphysical beliefs that God places his “umpire spirit” within man to guide him while also allowing for man to make his own decisions. Similarly, in *The Country Parson*, Herbert is struggling to understand how the physical and spiritual realms are intertwined when he explains the circular motion of words that enter the body through the ear, move to the heart, and then flow back into a person’s life and conversation: “O make thy word a swift word, passing from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the life and conversation” (336). Herbert searches to understand how the heart is connected with God’s words, which ultimately directs him down a circular path that moves through the body and is transferred back into a person’s actions and words. Much like Milton, Herbert acknowledges God’s motions inside man, but here he incorporates those motions as vitalizing “words” that travel in an efficient circuit that transform the believer’s life and conversation.

In a rather unusual poem, Donne incorporates the theory of circulation not only through his body, but seeping out of his dead, cut-open heart into the hearts of those nearby:

When I am dead, and doctors know not why,  
And my friend’s curiosity  
Will have me cut up to survey each part,  
When they shall find your picture in my heart,  
You think a sudden damp of love  
Will through all their senses move,  
And work on them as me (1-7)

Donne's opening stanza of "The Damp" discusses the medical practice of cutting open dead bodies—a practice which occurred during each of Harvey's Lumleian lectures—to "survey each part" in order to better understand the causes of the person's death. In the poem, Donne asserts that his friend's curiosity is what prompts the dissection, suggesting that the friend expected to find something odd or telling inside Donne's physical heart. This passage both nods to the scientific practice of examining each part of a corpse and incorporates a reference to a mystical "damp," or gas, that will "through all their senses move" and kill all who are present at the autopsy, just as it killed Donne. This movement of a gas traveling through the living bodies of those present mirrors the movement of blood and spirits thought to circulate through the body in the seventeenth century. Additionally, those who cut the body open will find "your picture in my heart." This picture of the woman will continue to cause death even after Donne is dead, which is the inverse of the medieval Christian belief that the picture of Christ was written in hearts and was proof of life after death. Donne extends this image of a heart being dissected to incorporate and complicate both anatomical practices and metaphysical beliefs that pictures are engraved on physical hearts. Moreover, this startling image of a human dissection highlights Donne's interest in seventeenth-century anatomical practices, as well as his desire to wrestle with the relationship between scientific and religious knowledge. In "Elegy XI" Donne includes a related reference to how the soul runs through the body like streams running through all countries: "The soul quickens head, feet and heart, / As streams, like veins, run through th' earth's every part, / Visit all countries (37-9). By intermixing physical and spiritual questions and images throughout his works, Donne reveals his desire to join what he believes to be the distinct worlds of the body and soul.

Harvey clearly states that blood must travel in a circle throughout the body and, at the same time, places extra emphasis on the central role of the heart rather than the liver or brain:

It is absolutely necessary to conclude that the blood in the animal body is impelled in a circle, and is in a state of ceaseless motion; that this is the act or function which the heart performs by means of its pulse; and that it is the sole and only end of the motion and contraction of the heart. (85)

In a time when scientists were beginning to look to the brain as the central organ of man, Harvey pushes against this decentering of the heart: “In fact, because the heart has by itself the organs sufficient for movement, we must refrain from asking if it receives movement and sensation from the brain” (108). Harvey bases his findings in what he can ascertain from his experiments, not in what those before him believed or in what emerging philosophers proposed. On both a scientific and spiritual level, Harvey’s experiment based theories appeal in different degrees to Herbert, Donne, and Milton because each of these poets are longing to understand the scientific changes concerning the heart as well as reconcile those changes with their belief that God communicates with believers through the heart.

#### HARVEY’S DISCOVERIES CONCERNING THE COLOR OF THE HEART AND BLOOD

In his 1628 treatise, Harvey claims that the heart is the center and originating source of the circulation of the blood, stating that the heart is the “fountain or dwelling-house of the body” (59). However, in his 1649 treatise, *On the Generation of Animals*, Harvey promotes the blood as the central component of life. In 1649, Harvey claims that the blood contains “native heat, call’d innate warmth,” and asserts that the blood itself is “the fountain of life” (188, 278). Harvey’s main question in his career was to find the precise location of what he called the “pulsific force,” whether that be in the heart or in the blood (Harvey 150, Rogers 18). Rogers describes this reversal by Harvey as a “radical revolution” (20). However, a close reading of

both Harvey's 1628 and 1649 treatises shows that Harvey's theories really did not drastically change. As Shackelford contends,

Harvey's belief in the primacy of the blood in no way conflicted with his argument that the heart is the primary *organ* of the body. As his ideas about physiology developed over the years, his commitment to the singular importance of the blood solidified. The blood was the source of vitality. It heated the heart, not the other way around. (95)

Nonetheless, we must remember that Harvey was a Royalist and physician to the king. The execution of Charles I in 1649 likely played a large role in why Harvey emphasizes the blood, rather than the heart, in his second treatise. Christopher Hill explains, "In a monarchy, the heart is most conveniently imagined a king, and in a republic, it is more prudent to demote the proud heart to a simple functionary of the more powerful blood" (45). Harvey's drastic political reversal compelled him to decenter the heart, which further highlights the interconnected nature of science, politics, and religion in the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, changes in power and in the organization of government dramatically affected how people thought about scientific theories. These changes in anatomical theories, in turn, altered religious beliefs.

Unlike Herbert (as well as Harvey in his latter treatise), Milton embraces ambiguities because for him it is the ambiguities that lead to a closer understanding of truth; the dynamic between ignorance and questioning is what allows Milton to approach what he considers "Truth." Milton scholarship today is largely characterized by two camps of critics. On one side, with Stanley Fish leading the way, critics argue that Milton's works can be interpreted as advocating a belief in a single truth. Fish argues that everything in Milton's works hinge on his belief in one true God and mankind's obedience to that God. On the other side, "New Milton Critics" such as Joseph Wittreich, Michael Bryson, and Ryan Netzley argue that critics today need to release Milton from this straight-and-narrow interpretative path and explore more diverse

interpretive possibilities. The two camps of Milton critics thus argue about whether or not Milton advocates for truth or hybridity, but what these critics overlook is that the debate, the unclaimed space between the two camps, is what drives Milton. Understanding how Milton uses the human heart in his works can begin to bring these two camps together in order to find a harmony of criticism that can flourish in the midst of debate. In *Areopagitica* Milton explains that since “virgin Truth” was “hewed into a thousand pieces, and scattered to the four winds,” man must now continuously work to gather up each limb all the while knowing that man “have not found them all, nor ever shall do, till her Master’s second coming” (1276-1283). In the fallen world, man must still strive to reassemble Truth, all the while knowing it cannot be completed. Since Milton lives in the fallen world, he cannot know perfect “Truth,” nor can he advocate for hybridity; he occupies the space between the two extremes. In this liminal space, Milton thrives because he believes his efforts continually generate understanding while at the same time increase his knowledge of his insufficiencies and his need to depend on God. For Milton, the human heart is either in “accord,” (meaning “joining of hearts,”) with God or the human heart is severed from God (*OED*, “accord” def 1). Due to Milton’s Arminian beliefs, this state is not permanent, and thus there is room to see ambiguities in Milton’s works. Furthermore, even when the heart is joined with God’s will, it cannot be perfectly in tune with God’s desires due to man’s sin. Milton shows in his works that man in the postlapsarian world will never act completely in accordance with God’s will; Milton concludes that on earth man “sees but through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Examining Milton’s belief that God sends his spirit to dwell within humans in their physical heart and blood is the beginning to understanding how Milton both advances a belief in truth and a belief that that truth can never be completely realized or understood on earth.

Milton, more than Herbert or Donne, simultaneously embraces both spiritual and anatomical questions precisely because he cannot perfectly reconcile them. The space between the two is what is useful to him, for that space is where Milton wrestles with his beliefs and approaches the clearest answers he believes he can ascertain in the fallen world. It is useful that the physical and spiritual realms disagree and do not fit perfectly together because it is in that margin of difference where Milton seeks a better understanding of God. Adam and Eve clasp hands as they leave paradise, but, unlike Herbert's "Clasping of Hands" with God, their imperfect hand-holding is tinged with fear and loss, although it also brings hope to the rest of mankind.

Milton incorporates detailed references to the changing theories of anatomy because he is searching to combine these contemporary changes with his theology; he incorporates references to anatomy and the heart because he is searching to "answer [his] desire of knowledge within bounds" (*PL* 7.120). He does not shy away from incorporating passages about "animal spirits," "pure blood," "Organs of Fancy," and the physical details that make up "the upright heart and pure," because he is searching for answers that allow science and theology to come together; his belief in a constant obedience to God through times of incomprehension is what yields answers in his theology (*PL* 4. 805, 4.802, 1.18). In *Paradise Lost* Milton explains that tried hearts are hearts that stay the course of obedience when faced with diverging forces. The existence of the opposing forces is what leads to relevant and true answers:

Our voluntarie service he requires,  
Not our necessitated, such with him  
Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how  
Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve  
Willing or no, who will but what they must  
By Destinie, and can no other choose?  
Myself and all th' Angelic Host that stand  
In sight of God enthroned, our happie state



Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;  
On other surety none; freely we serve  
Because we freely love, as in our will  
To love or not; in this we stand or fall. (5.529-540)

Raphael's question "how / Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve / Willing or no" also applies to Milton's questioning of anatomy and theology: If man does not freely work to find the answers to both scientific and spiritual questions, how can he know if he came to a valid conclusion? Just as hearts need to be tried, so do theories, for it is the trial process that generates growth and answers. Unlike Donne's plea for God to forcefully "batter my heart," Milton asserts that true obedience is not something inflicted or forced upon someone, but generated from voluntary service. Donne desires his heart to be enslaved, while Raphael stresses that man's heart must choose to obey. Both Donne and Milton, nonetheless, point to the necessity for and power generated from constricted hearts, which mirror Harvey's emphasis on the heart's systole rather than diastole.

In *The Generation of Animals*, Harvey explains how he wants his readers to think for themselves about what they see to be true. He meticulously describes each step of his experiments so that the readers can mentally walk through the steps, and thus, believe for themselves: "We are, I say, to strive after personal experience, not to rely on the experience of others: without which indeed no one can properly become a student of any branch of natural science" (20). Harvey does not want to force his theories on others; he wants his readers to come to the correct conclusions through personal experiences and knowledge. Similarly, through his Lumleian lectures in the Amen Corner anatomical theater, Harvey encouraged his audience to witness his experiments and draw their own conclusions. Donne had ample opportunities to witness Harvey's dissection of bodies and ponder the mysteries of the human heart for himself; however, in his works, Donne basks in contemplating the mysteries of the heart rather than

advancing his questions into stable beliefs. It is probable, considering Donne's attention to and pleasure in uncertainty, that he enjoyed the experience of the anatomical theater—listening to Harvey's untraditional theories echoing through the theater, viewing ruptured and dissected corpses on the central stage-like table, watching the curious and horrified reactions of those sitting around him—more than he enjoyed the actual attainment of a solution to a current debate.

Much like Harvey, Milton asserts in *Areopagitica* that individuals must hold beliefs for themselves rather than relying on what others tell them to believe: "A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believes things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy" (1148-9). While agreeing with Harvey that individuals should "strive for personal experience," Milton was further removed from Harvey and likely did not attend his lectures. Born thirty years after Harvey and an adamant opponent of Charles I, Milton would not have been as directly connected with Harvey as Donne would have been; nevertheless, he unquestionably would have read Harvey's works and been influenced by his revolutionary findings. As an individual closely attentive to the political and scientific changes in the seventeenth century, as well as a voracious reader, assuredly he was aware of Harvey's findings. Furthermore, because Milton outlived Harvey, Milton had the advantage of seeing Harvey's theories accepted and expanded upon by later anatomists throughout the mid-seventeenth century. Unlike Donne and Herbert, who died before Descartes published his theory of Dualism, Milton not only was influenced by Harvey's theories but also had to juggle the emerging liberal theories of Descartes, which greatly influenced how mid-seventeenth-century individuals thought about the heart. Just as critics need to examine how Harvey's works lay the foundation for how Herbert, Donne, and Milton describe the heart, critics must also recognize Descartes's influence

on Milton's descriptions of the heart which will be the focus on the following chapter. In *Areopagitica*, Milton emphasizes that "Truth" is a "streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition" (1145-6). Correspondingly, as critics, we must further investigate the streaming fountain of knowledge inundating seventeenth-century poets and examine the teeming waves of knowledge circulating not just among the poets, but from anatomists and philosophers such as Harvey and Descartes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HEART AND MIND: DOES THE “HEART OF MAN SUFFICE TO COMPREHEND?”

As we saw in chapter two, Herbert, Donne, and Milton were all influenced by William Harvey’s theories concerning the purpose of the heart and the progressive belief that blood circulates through the body from the vivifying force of the heart. This chapter demonstrates that although Milton’s descriptions of the heart are influenced by Harvey’s works, Milton’s descriptions are complicated by the emerging mechanist philosophies of René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes in the mid-seventeenth century. Unlike Descartes and Hobbes, Milton locates the heart, and not the brain, as the primary site of belief, consciousness, and will. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Milton clearly realizes that belief in the heart as the center of man’s will, intellect, and emotions is under attack. To combat the philosophical and scientific movements that advanced a belief in mechanism and a corresponding divorce from the belief in free will, Milton, drawing on the scientific experiments of Harvey, breaks with centuries of Christian orthodoxy concerning dualism and turns to a belief in monism. Monism allowed him to merge current scientific reasoning with his belief in free will, while still maintaining that the heart freely thinks, feels, believes, and communicates with the divine.

According to Milton, God’s “Umpire Conscience” (*PL* 3.195) dwells in human hearts and serves as God’s appointed judge in man to help guide him:

. . . . from Heav'n  
Hee to his own a Comforter will send,

The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
His Spirit within them, and the Law of Faith  
Working through love, upon thir hearts shall write, (*PL* 12.485-9)

Unlike Descartes and Hobbes, Milton contends that God's Spirit inhabits human hearts and that God writes "upon thir hearts" to help them persist in their beliefs until Judgment Day. God is not a distant mystical being but rather a God, "Working through love," who occupies a physical and spiritual space inside the core of man. According to Milton, the human heart is not a mere mechanical pump, as believed by Descartes and Hobbes, but a living, spirit-filled organ that is the center of man's consciousness and free will.

In his 1647 treatise, *Descriptions of the Human Body*, Descartes contends that the heart does not have the capability of thinking or making choices:

Since childhood . . . we have all found by experience that many bodily movements occur in obedience to the will, which is one of the faculties of the soul, and this has led us to believe that the soul is the principle responsible for all bodily movement. Our ignorance of anatomy and mechanics has also played a major role here. For in restricting our consideration to the outside of the human body we have never imagined that it has within it enough organs or mechanisms to move of its own accord in all the different ways which we observe. Our error was reinforced by our belief that no movement occurs inside a corpse, though it possesses the same organs as a living body, and lacks only a soul. The other functions which some people attribute to the soul, such as moving the heart and the arteries, digesting food in the stomach and so on, do not involve any thought, and are simply bodily movements; further, it is more common for a body to be moved by another body than for it to be moved by a soul. Hence, we have less reason to attribute such functions to the soul than to the body. (Descartes 1985: *Descriptions of the Human Body*, 314-315)

Descartes separates the soul from the body and describes the body as a mechanism incapable of thought. He argues that the movements of the heart are "simply bodily movements" that are in no way connected with thought, consciousness, or the will. He states that the organs inside the body "move of [their] own accord, and it is "our error" and "our ignorance of anatomy" to think otherwise. Descartes abandons the metaphysical theories of his predecessors, such as Aristotle,

Erasmus, Saint Augustine, and Cornelius Agrippa, and claims that the soul does not give life to the body nor does it occupy a physical space inside the body (Goetz 118). While Stephen Fallon argues that “Descartes’s dualism brought the ‘mind-body problem’ to the center of mid-seventeenth-century intellectual life,” (48), I want to add that Descartes’s theories, specifically pertaining to the mechanism of the heart, caused people to question if the heart itself could think and know God as the Scriptures suggests: “I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart”<sup>22</sup> (1 Kings 3:12).

Unlike Milton, who praises the heart as the central part of man that communicates with God and exercises free will, Thomas Hobbes states in his 1651 work, *The Leviathan*, “What is the Heart, but a Spring; and the Nerves, but so many Strings; and the Joynts, but so many Wheeles” (1). Hobbes, like Descartes, reduces the heart to a mechanical organ void of thinking and reasoning, arguing that the universe contains nothing other than matter in motion, which can be analyzed mathematically: “But the causes of universal things . . . are manifest of themselves, or (as they say commonly) known to nature; . . . for they have all but one universal cause, which is mechanical motion” (*De Corpore* I, vi, 5). Hobbes’s theories remove God’s guidance and man’s free will from the daily life of individuals and directly contradict the Scriptures: “For in [God] we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For

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<sup>22</sup> The main question contemporaries such as Harvey and Milton had concerning Descartes’ dualism was how the two essences of body and soul communicated. Descartes explained that the soul has its “principal seat [siege principal]” in the pineal gland, which he explains is the place for a kind of hydraulic system of animal spirits refined by the blood. Descartes explains in the *Treatise on Man* that “sensory impressions force spirits through the hollow nerves, causing the pineal gland, located at the confluence of all the nerves, to pivot; conversely, the pivoting of the gland forces the animal spirits through the nerves to the muscles to make them move. The soul, seated in the gland, is the ultimate recipient of incoming messages and the source of outgoing commands” (Cottingham 1:108). As Fallon explains, the question of mind-body interaction is not solved by Descartes’ pineal gland theory, but rather miniaturized (28).

we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28).<sup>23</sup> Hobbes’s theories subvert traditional religious beliefs and assuredly agitated Milton. Hobbes further argues that “Conceptions and apparitions are nothing really, but motion in some internal substance of the head” (*De Homine VII*, 1). For Hobbes, everything, including thoughts and ideas, are simply mechanical motions.<sup>24</sup> Hobbes does not even claim that conceptions are motions in some internal substance in the *heart*, but chooses instead to emphasize that the primary motions are in the *head*. Hobbes’s theories not only erase a belief in free will and moral choice, but de-emphasize the heart as a predominant place of motion.

Unlike Harvey, who saw the heart as an organic pump that vivifies the body and is imbued with a “vital principle” (150), Descartes and Hobbes argue against any unknown faculty causing motion in the body and the heart. Both philosophers would have clearly objected to Milton’s claim in *Paradise Lost* of God literally “knowing [Adam’s] heart” and “[God’s] motions in [Adam]” directing his steps because they viewed the heart as a mechanical pump void of volition, consciousness, and any connection with the divine (11.91-2). Both men would have also disagreed with Milton’s literal claim in *The Reason of Church Government* that God’s “word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay” (666). Milton explains that he could not resist God’s word burning in his heart, which drew him to write, just as it forced Jeremiah to speak.<sup>25</sup> Milton believed he was a

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<sup>23</sup> Additional scripture passages that contradict Hobbes’s theories: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

<sup>24</sup> Hobbes redefines life and argues that “the same mechanical laws that govern the motions of a clock govern mental motions” (Fallon 33). Hobbes was very much against any kind of material self-motion, arguing, “there can be no cause of motion, except by a body contiguous and moved” (*Elements of Philosophy*. Ed. William Molesworth, 11 vols. (London: Bohn, 1839), 1:124).

<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in the book of Mark, the Son of God is said to have gone into the wilderness to be tested because “the spirit driveth him into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12).

prophetic writer called by God; he believed God literally stirred his heart and inspired him to write specific words.

Both Milton and Descartes describe the existence of an internal fire: Descartes claims that man's heart contains a "fire without light" that merely causes the blood to boil mechanically, while Milton believes the burning fire inside his heart has its source in "Celestial light / [that] Shine[s] inward" (*PL* 3.51-2); Milton claims that the fire in his heart comes from God, whereas Descartes claims his "fire without light" is created by a bodily fermentation process. Throughout his writings, Milton accentuates that "God is light," while Descartes imagines the heart inside man as negatively as the devils in hell who live in "A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round / As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames / No light, but rather darkness visible" (*PL* 1.61-3). Descartes's "fire without light" is the prideful words of Milton's Satan:

Seest thou yon dreary Plain, forlorn and wilde,  
The seat of desolation, voyd of light,  
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,  
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,  
And reassembling our afflicted Powers,  
Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,  
How overcome this dire Calamity,  
What reinforcement we may gain from Hope,  
If not what resolution from despare. (*PL* 1.180-91)

Milton deliberately echoes Descartes in his depiction of Satan by accentuating his arch-fiend's mechanist beliefs. Milton's Satan lives in a "fire without light," and, just as Descartes's theories challenge the Christian belief that God works in men's hearts to guide and sustain them, Milton's Descartes-like Satan, as well as Descartes himself, work to "most offend" God by quenching hope and defining man's heart as a mechanical pump void of "celestial light" (3.51). In *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton explains that "the first principle of all godly and virtuous



actions in men” is “the love of God, as a fire sent from heaven to be ever kept alive upon the altar of our hearts” (680). Milton’s belief that there is a divinely inspired fire in believers’ hearts directly contradicts Descartes’s insistence that there is a lightless, mechanical force inside each man’s heart that is self-created and burns on its own.

In *Descriptions of the Human Body*, Descartes argues against Harvey’s theories: “If we suppose that the heart moves in the way Harvey describes, we must imagine some faculty which causes the movement; yet, the nature of this faculty is much harder to conceive of than whatever Harvey purports to explain by involving it” (9.243-44). Unlike Harvey, Descartes rejects Infusion Theory, which holds that souls are not made from human generation but are created by God from nothing—from no pre-existent human substance or materials (Rogers 12). Milton rejects Infusion Theory because, according to it, the soul is not related in substance to the flesh it inhabits; for Milton, the body and spirit are made of one essence. In *Paradise Lost*, as Satan falls, his body and spirit degenerate simultaneously. By the end of the epic, he is completely hollow of all of God’s grace and light, while also literally transformed into “a monstrous serpent on his Belly Prone” (10.514). Milton sides with the Vitalist Movement that argues for an intertwined relationship between the body and soul: “The philosophy of Vitalism, known also as animist materialism, holds in its tamest manifestation the inseparability of body and soul and, in its boldest, the infusion of all material substance with the power of reason and self-motion” (Rogers 1). After the 1650’s, Milton gravitates to the liberal Vitalist Movement because it allows man free will: “At a historical moment in which Calvinist theology and Hobbesian philosophy seems to lead inexorably to a crippling constraint on human freedom, the vitalist dream of material self-determination could function as an ontological justification of the philosophy of free will” (Fallon 96). For Milton, the spirit and body had to be linked so that man

could retain both freedom and a connection with the divine creator; Milton's divine creator underwrites man's freedom.<sup>26</sup> Descartes's theories ultimately challenge the traditional Christian belief in the existence of God and God's role in creating life, a challenge Milton could not accept and therefore adamantly attacked in his later works. Milton, while not believing in God's complete agency over man, does not extinguish God from man's life or heart. Descartes and Hobbes separate God from man's heart and lead the way for philosophers after them to move further away from a belief that God inhabits hearts and that man's heart is a location of volition and consciousness.

Milton would agree with John Flavel, the great Puritan writer, who warns:

The heart of man is his worst part before it is regenerated, and the best afterward; it is the seat of principles, and the fountain of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion, is to keep the heart with God. Here lies the very force and stress of religion; here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of heaven a strait gate. (*On Keeping The Heart* 1)

According to Flavel and Milton, the heart must not be cast off as a mechanical pump. The heart is vital to man's physical and spiritual life, while at the same time, it is exceedingly malleable and thus, as we will see later, similar to the refined bodies of angels as well as gold. The impressionable, thinking heart that Milton promotes can be unfavorable and stony or upright and fleshy. While mid-seventeenth-century philosophers marginalize the heart, Milton places the heart in the middle of the contemporary philosophical debates, arguing that God's Spirit "dost prefer / Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure" (*PL* 1. 17-8).

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<sup>26</sup> For a further discussion of Infusion Theory and Vitalism, see John Henry, "The Matter of Souls: Medical Theory and Theology in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Roger French and Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) pp. 87-113; and Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers*, pp. 79-110. Scripture emphasizes that God created Adam and Eve and breathed into them a living soul, made in the image of God with the capability of reproducing people like themselves with a soul; after the Fall, all humans were made in the image of Adam in his own likeness, according to his image (Genesis 5:3). See also John 3, Colossians 1:13, and Ephesians 5:8.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Milton clearly knew that the heart as a seat of comprehension and choice was under attack. The contemporary philosophical debates stirred by Descartes and Hobbes demystified the heart and moved away from a belief in a personal God. Fallon explains, “The mechanical philosophies placed a strain on traditional Christian beliefs in creation, the immortality and incorporeality of the soul, the immutability of moral standards, and the creature’s moral responsibility” (48). The mechanical philosophies also place tremendous pressure on the interconnected scientific and theological belief structure of the early seventeenth century that I discussed in chapter two. By the mid-seventeenth century, the philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes created fissures that distanced science from theology, which enabled people to reject a belief in final causes and a belief that God, the “Prime Mover,” inhabits hearts.<sup>27</sup> Milton, keenly aware of the philosophical debates engulfing England and the continent, eventually looked to monism to re-center the heart as both a physical and spiritual core of man that could reconnect science and theology. In *Paradise Lost*, when Adam asks Raphael, “how first began this Heav’n which we behold?” Raphael answers Adam, explaining that if he were able to fully articulate the works of God, Adam’s heart—not his mind or brain—would be the seat of comprehension: “though to recount Almighty works / What words or tongue of Seraph can suffice, / Or heart of man Suffice to comprehend?” (7.86, 7.112-4). Even though Raphael attests that his words and tongue are not sufficient to perfectly recount God’s works, Raphael explains that comprehension of such wisdom, even if only partial, must take place in the heart.<sup>28</sup> Milton could not watch the new philosophical theories developing around him marginalize the

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<sup>27</sup> Fallon argues that both Descartes and Hobbes “banished formal and final cause from the practice of science, and argued for a mechanical universe driven by material and efficient causation alone” (31).

<sup>28</sup> Luke 24:13-32 offers a similar indication of man’s apprehension of God through his heart and not his mind. At the end of their journey on the road to Emmaus, the two men realize that it was Christ walking with them: “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other: ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’ (31-2). First, their hearts burned with knowledge, then God opened their eyes and gave them intellectual perception.

heart when he believed, as King Solomon did, that man must “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Proverbs 4:23). The mechanistic philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes emptied the heart of God’s presence, man’s intuition of God, and man’s free will; according to Milton, men were being enslaved by mechanism and needed to redirect their beliefs to a recognition that human hearts work in accordance with God.

Early in his career, Milton’s works appear to express a belief in dualism; however, due to the pressures of the contemporary philosophical debate that moved away from God or away from free will, by the late 1650s Milton “worked his way to the unequivocal materialist monism of the *Christian Doctrine* and *Paradise Lost*” (Fallon 96).<sup>29</sup> Monism allowed Milton to conceive of the heart as a physical organ, a seat of man’s will, and a spiritual site of the divine in man, thus bridging the gap between science and theology that appeared to widen under the influence of Descartes and Hobbes.

In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton explains,

Man is a living being, intrinsically and properly one and individual. He is not double or separable: not, as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two different and distinct elements, soul and body. On the contrary, the whole man is the soul, and the soul the man: a body, in other words, or individual substance, animated, sensitive, and rational. (6:318)

Unlike Herbert and Donne, who wrote before Descartes and Hobbes, Milton was aware of the danger of the changing tide that worked either to erase the soul or completely separate the body from the soul, and chose to enter the scientific and philosophical debates in order to combat the dramatic changes in thought occurring around him. The more mature Milton of the 1660s and 1670s came to believe that the body and soul were not distinct but that instead all matter was

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<sup>29</sup> For a closer analysis of Milton’s shift from a belief in dualism to a belief in monism, see Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers*. William Kerrigan in *The Sacred Complex* also argues for Milton’s monism in his later works (193-262).

alive and consisted of one individual, animated substance that was either in accord with God or acting against God.

In his works written after 1650, Milton spiritualizes the body and redefines spirit in ways that might help to save the belief in the spirit from disappearing. As the belief in mechanism grew, the belief in incorporeal spirits decreased. For the mature Milton, all matter had to be alive to some extent in order to give the spirit a physical quality. In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton argues, “The idea that the spirit of man is separate from his body, so that it may exist somewhere in isolation, complete and intelligent, is nowhere to be found in scripture, and is plainly at odds with nature and reason” (6:319). Monism allowed Milton to believe that the heart could be spirit and the spirit could be fleshy. Fallon explains: “Spirit and matter become for Milton two modes of the same substance: spirit is rarefied matter, and matter is dense spirit. All things, from insensate objects through souls, are manifestations of this one substance” (80). Thus, when Milton refers to a “heart of Rock” and God’s spirit softening “stonie hearts,” Milton literally means that the physical qualities of the organ are transformed, just as the organ is spiritually transformed (*PL* 10.494, 3.189). A heart that is in accord with God’s will and acknowledges God as creator is a soft heart that is holy.

Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton incorporates multiple creation stories to emphasize the importance of his monist and ontological beliefs and to affirm that the heart, not the mind, is the mortal core that unites man with God. Adam, Eve, and Satan, as well as the more allegorical characters of Sin and Death, all desire to understand better how they came into being and how they can know their creator. For example, Satan confronts Abdiel, challenging him to explain how angels came to exist:

. . . . rememberst thou  
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?

We know no time when we were not as now;  
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd  
By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course  
Had circl'd his full Orbe, the birth mature  
Of this our native Heav'n, Ethereal Sons.  
Our puissance is our own, our own right hand  
Shall teach us highest deeds (5.557-65)

Satan attests that he was created from his “own quickening power”; in one respect, Satan is accurately explaining how he came to be a fallen angel. Yet, Satan is also lying and knowingly misrepresenting his initial birth as the angelic Lucifer by the Heavenly Father. Satan skips to his second birth when he is transformed into an archangel by his own actions. Satan argues that he was “self-begot,” a belief Milton himself strongly opposed. Milton consistently represents Satan as misconstruing his own original creation as Lucifer. Milton does this in order to draw attention to his belief that God is the author of all that exists both on earth and in heaven. According to John 8:44, Satan “was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” Milton draws on this passage and underscores that, prior to his fall, Lucifer was created with a pure and upright heart, as well as the ability to choose to know right and wrong; however, after his fall his heart is empty of God and hollow. His heart is no longer connected to God and no longer has the capacity to be connected with God. Satan chooses to lead a rebellion and corrupt other angels, making him “a murderer from the beginning” of his existence as a devil. Milton’s Satan is thus creative in a destructive way. When tempting Eve, Satan flatly contradicts God’s warning and tells Eve that she will not die if she eats of the forbidden fruit. From his very first conversation with mankind, Satan proves himself a liar and a murderer. He motivates man’s spiritual suicide—man’s emptying his heart of God—which leads to man’s decay and death. Satan misconstrues his birth and fails to recognize who first created him because his heart is

empty. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, understanding how one is created is imperative for Milton and his belief that God, the creator, communicates with his beings inside their freely thinking hearts that were made with a desire to better know their maker.

Adam similarly desires to better understand his birth and creator. He explains to Raphael that he first awoke from “soundest sleep . . . gaze’d awhile at the ample Skie,” then “by quick instinctive motion up I sprung” and “upright stood” (8.253, 258-9, 260-1). After peering at the sky, the home of his creator, Adam is drawn to an “upright” stance by an “instinctive motion.” This reference to “upright” echoes back to the opening sentence of Milton’s epic, reminding the reader that God creates Adam with an upright heart and that God prefers “Before all Temples th’ upright heart and pure” that is filled with his love (1.18). At his creation, Adam is also elevated to his feet by an “instinctive motion,” foreshadowing Milton’s later passage, which illuminates that God guides Adam with “[His] motions in him” (11.91-2). The term “motions” also points back to Harvey’s 1628 treatise *On the Motion of the Heart and the Blood*, which reflects Descartes’s and Hobbes’s mechanistic philosophies and describes not only how the blood circulates through the body but also how God uses the heart to vivify man. Additionally, in the seventeenth century the word “instinctive” is often connected to a belief that God offers man internal promptings. J. Hall, in his 1633 text, *A plaine and familiar explication of all the hard texts of the whole divine Scripture of the Old and New Testaments*, uses “instincts” and “motions from God” analogously: “He began to have many instincts, and strong motions from God” (I. 99). R. Burthogge, in his 1694 *An Essay upon Reason*, correlates “instinctive” with being moved by the Spirit of God: “This false conceit of his being immediately instinced and moved by the Spirit of God” (40). Moreover, in Book 6 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes the Son’s chariot

“itself instinct with Spirit” (752).<sup>30</sup> Adam is brought to his feet by God’s “instinctive motion” in his heart, not by some kind of human, mechanical, boiling, or fermentation process.

When describing Earth’s creation, Milton carefully explains that first, “the Spirit of God” infused life into chaos, and then “vital warmth” saturated the fluid mass and purged all that was “adverse to life” (7.235-6, 239). Milton’s description of Earth’s creation can also be taken as a description of the human heart being vivified by the spirit of God:

. . . Darkness profound  
Cover’d th’ Abyss: but on the wat’ry calm  
His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,  
And vital virtue infus’d, and vital warmth  
Throughout the fluid Mass, but downward purg’d  
The black tartareous cold infernal dregs  
Adverse to life: (7.233-9)

The “fluid mass” of the heart is “infused” with God’s warmth. Blood pulses within the heart and purges all harmful “dregs / Adverse to life” out of the heart and ultimately out of the body. The excretion of impure elements purifies the blood and facilitates the heart’s functions to better follow God’s guidance (7.237-9). Milton’s description that the “Spirit of God” pours “vital virtue” into chaos in order to create life also contradicts Descartes’s and Hobbes’s theories of a mechanical universe—and a mechanical heart—void of purpose and final causes (7.135-6).<sup>31</sup> Similar to Colossians 1:16-17, which states, “all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist,” Milton explains that God’s spirit acts upon chaos to create life not just in man, but throughout all matter. Life exists in all remaining

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<sup>30</sup> R. Jonas, in his 1540 text *Byrth of Mankynde*, also uses “instinctive” to point to God’s internal power inside man: “God hath instincted such a power and vertue vnto these mortall creatures” (3.80). The OED defines *Instinct* “To instigate, prompt, impel internally.”

<sup>31</sup> For a seventeenth-century critique of the scholastic conception of creation from celestial heat and primigenial moisture, see Jean-Baptiste van Helmont, *Works*, trans. by J. C., (London, 1667), 726-30. The view that vital heat is celestial was held by the sixteenth-century Italian physician and philosopher Girolamo Cardano, discussed in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1988), 250. For the debate about the origins of vital heat, see William B. Hunter, *The Descent of Urania: Studies in Milton, 1946-1988* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1989), 122-23.



substances not “adverse to life” because God chose to first act and thus caused “vital warmth” to permeate “throughout the fluid Mass” of not only creation but also the human heart (7.236-7).

Furthermore, Raphael explains to Adam that all things are created from “one first matter”:

O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom  
All things process, and up to him return,  
If not depriv'd from good, created all  
Such to perfection, one first matter all,  
Indu'd with various forms, various degrees  
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;  
But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,  
As neerer to him plac't or neerer tending  
Each in thir several active Sphears assignd,  
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds  
Proportiond to each kind. (5.469-79)

Everything—from body and soul, to rocks and plants, to men and angels—consists of the same substance endued with life. The difference between each is not what it is made of but the “various forms” and “various degrees” of the one substance. Due to Milton’s monistic beliefs, the spirit is physical and the body is spiritual; thus, when Milton declares that the body can “up to spirit work,” he is not talking in dualistic terms; rather, he is emphasizing that all things can become more soulful. Just as ice, water, and steam are all made of the same substance, yet look and feel differently, according to Milton’s monism, all creation is made of “one first matter” that varies only in form and degree.<sup>32</sup> The one substance can also change in form and degree according to how “nearer to [God] plac’t, or neerer tending” (5.76). Due to its proximity to God, the ground in heaven is composed of malleable, refined gold—“The riches of Heav'ns pavement,

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<sup>32</sup> Genesis 4:10 explains that Abel’s blood cried out to God: “And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.” Similarly, Jesus explains that if the people do not sing Hosannas at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the rocks themselves will cry out: “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40). Examples of what we would think of today as inanimate nature praising God are found in Psalms 96:11, 98:7-9, 114:7, and Isaiah 55:12. Matthew 3:9 states that God is able to raise up children to Abraham out of stones, which would be out of the circumscribed sphere of man: “And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

trod'n Gold,"—while the ground in Eden is "fertile" and "covered with pearly grain," and the ground in hell is dense, "ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd" (1.69). Things and beings moving nearer to God become more pure and refined as things and beings falling away from God become more corrupt and dense.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, just as man can be refined, the heart itself can be "more refin'd, more spirituuous, and pure" as it is more in accord with God.

Raphael explains to Adam that with time, man could move up the chain of being and become like angels: "by gradual scale sublim'd / to vital Spirits aspire" (5.83-4).<sup>34</sup> Yet, Milton confines each form of being to "their several active Spheres assigned" (5.477). The pavement in heaven cannot aspire to become an angel, nor can the fallen devils fall further and become dirt. Each form has a sphere in which it can move closer or further away from God, but that sphere is circumscribed for each form. Rather than thinking of the chain of being in *Paradise Lost* as a linear chain, Milton's chain of being is better described through alchemy.<sup>35</sup> Like gold, the angels in heaven readily absorb God's vital warmth and are thus highly spirituuous, pure, and conductive. The fallen angels once removed from God's warmth and light, ultimately lose their luster. The change, however, is not instantaneous, for Satan's form retains some of "her Original brightness" when he falls from heaven. Much like heated gold that is removed from intense fire, some time must pass before the hot gold and the fallen Satan can be completely drained of all of its warmth:

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<sup>33</sup> Fallon explains how the fallen angels' bodies thicken and become more gross (208-9).

<sup>34</sup> This is similar to Psalms 8:4-5, which states, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." Scripture teaches that believers will judge angels at some point in the future, thus, in one respect, man will one day sit above angels: "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Corinthians 6:3).

<sup>35</sup> In early modern England, alchemy was often used to express deep philosophical and spiritual truths. Lyndy Abraham in *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), explains, "When, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton wrote of 'arch-chemic sun' whose fields and rivers 'Breathe forth elixir pure' and run 'potable gold' it is a living, working, spiritual alchemy that is referred to" (3.606-9). She adds, "Alchemy provided a vibrant model for denoting physical, psychological, spiritual and cosmological concepts, and the writers [in early modern England] naturally drew on its rich symbolism for their art" (xvi).

his form had yet not lost  
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd  
Less then Arch Angel ruind, and th' excess  
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n  
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air  
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon  
In dim Eclips disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the Nations, (1.591-8)

The arch-fiends are not merely more cold and brittle once they fall; rather, they are eventually transformed into hollow beings incapable of conducting vital warmth. Man, on the other hand, is created by God with dirt and is thus an alloy of both gold and dirt that is by nature less volatile. Compared to gold and angels, alloys and men are less able to absorb God's heat but also less able to be chilled to the point of being broken into fragments that can never be restored. Man is thus alchemically less conductive than angels, but, when removed from God's vital warmth after the fall, man does not ultimately break and become irredeemable. Even after the fall, man has the capacity to retain his shape and conduct warmth once the heat source returns; man has the ability to be forgiven by God, which thus allows man—not the devils—to be transformed to a heavenly body on Judgment Day. Alloys by nature resist deformation, while elements like gold are more susceptible to breaking when cold. The fallen angels are both lower than man in their spiritual proximity and intimacy with God while also more able to be transformed; their range of existence extends both higher and lower than man's assigned sphere; yet, because they are fallen, they will always remain fallen.

After explaining to Adam that all is created from "one first matter," Raphael further answers Adam's questions concerning the nature of angels and man:

Time may come when men  
With Angels may participate, and find  
No inconvenient Diet, nor too light Fare:  
And from these corporal nutriments perhaps  
Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit

Improv'd by tract of time, and wingd ascend  
Ethereal, as wee, or may at choice  
Here or in Heav'nly Paradises dwell; (5.493-500)

Raphael emphasizes that with time, and the correct diet, man “may at last turn all to Spirit,” acknowledging that man’s body is already also spirit to some extent (5.497). Milton is not claiming that angels do not have material bodies here; for Milton, spirit is matter.<sup>36</sup> To return to the gold analogy, Raphael explains to Adam that man can move from being an alloy of gold and dirt, to being more like gold; however, we must remember that if that transformation had occurred, there would have been more severe consequences for man’s fall after such a migration up the chain of being. How fortunate it was for man that he fell before he “all to Spirit” turned (5.497). If Adam and Eve turned “all to Spirit” and then fell from God’s grace, they would have been like the fallen Satan and would have been irredeemable.

During the war in heaven, Milton explains that both the angels siding with God and the dissenting angels enjoy a fluid anatomical structure, similar to heated gold, which makes their internal organs less distinct than man’s organs. Even Satan is “vital in every part” and able to re-limb himself:

Yet soon he heal'd; for Spirits that live throughout  
Vital in every part, not as frail man  
In Entrailes, Heart or Head, Liver or Reines;  
Cannot but by annihilating die;  
Nor in thir liquid texture mortal wound  
Receive, no more then can the fluid Aire:  
All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Eare,  
All Intellect, all Sense, and as they please,  
They Limb themselves, and colour, shape or size  
Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare. (6.344-53)

The bodies of Milton’s angels are fluid; every area of their body is all parts of a man’s anatomy.

If an angel in battle loses his eye, his eye will regrow due to his “liquid texture.” Similarly, if his

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<sup>36</sup> To further understand how Milton’s conception of angels is different from his contemporaries who do not believe angels have material bodies, see Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers*, 137-67.

chest is destroyed, the central mass of his essence would regrow because the organs normally located inside the chest of a man are fluid in angels. Yet, Milton does refer to specific characteristics of different angel's hearts. Abdiel is praised for his "undaunted heart" (6.113), and Satan's heart "Distends with pride, and harden[s] in his strength" (1.571-2). Even God himself is described with a "Heart Omniscient" (10.6). So, how can angels be "All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Eare" and still have hearts that are specifically undaunted, hard, pure, distended, and soft, and have hearts that can change consistency?

Milton begins his description of angels with the phrase "All heart they live," accentuating that their entire existence, based on the spirituality and consistency of their hearts, is like gold. Because of their "liquid texture," all of them are either in accordance with God or separated from God. Angels are the extreme example of man in that angels are either steadfastly acting according to God's guidance or completely fallen and separated from God's glory. According to his Arminian theology, Milton believes man, an alloy of gold and dirt, can waver between following God and falling away from God, whereas, according to his descriptions of celestial beings, the angels' entire existence is permanently based on the consistency of their hearts. After the archangels' defeat in heaven, Satan explains,

. . . but of this be sure,  
To do aught good never will be our task,  
But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
As being the contrary to his high will  
Whom we resist. (1.158-62)

The fallen angels will be forever against God, for "all [their] Glory [is] extinct" and they will forever have empty hearts and be removed from God's "vital warmth" (1.140). Even with his Arminian beliefs, Milton does not describe angels as possessing the opportunity to regain their

salvation. Once fallen, their hearts can never be softened and they will be forever like Belial: “all was false and hollow” (2.112).

The archangels simultaneously fall physically and spiritually so far away from God that they are broken and left with hollow, condemned, and empty hearts that will be eternally void of God and his love. The fiends cannot even possess hardened hearts, for, in Milton’s theology, even Pharaoh’s hardened heart still retains the possibility of softening, whereas the devils’ hearts are permanently hollow and empty of God’s vital warmth. The devils’ hearts are beyond being cold; they are stony, broken, and empty. In the war in heaven, the devil-made cannons, described as “hollow’d bodies” made of “Stonie mould,” reflect the lost archangels themselves:

Which to our eyes discoverd new and strange,  
A triple-mounted row of Pillars laid  
On Wheels (for like to Pillars most they seem'd  
Or hollow'd bodies made of Oak or Firr  
With branches lopt, in Wood or Mountain fell'd)  
Brass, Iron, Stonie mould, had not thir mouthes  
With hideous orifice gap't on us wide,  
Portending hollow truce; (6.571-8)

The fiends mine and hollow out even the depths of heaven, creating hollow cannons, which echo forth “hollow truce” and foreshadow “the hollow Deep / Of Hell” that will soon become their everlasting home and grave. Before Satan’s fall, no being had witnessed the “new and strange” devil-engineered cannons or the hollow-hearted fallen angels. Moreover, before the devils’ fall, no hearts had “Stonie mould[s]” let alone a stony characteristic (6.579). All living creatures were conductive of God’s vital warmth and had fleshy hearts attuned to God. With sin came the devils’ transformation—a transformation not just from a fleshy heart to a stony heart, but a transformation that left all the devils with an outer “stonie mould” and an interior of irredeemable emptiness.

As Satan falls through the “hollow Abyss” between heaven and hell, Milton accentuates his flailing “head, hands, wings, or feet” in order to draw attention to how his external characteristics mirror his internal substance (2.518, 2.949). As the stunning sounds that fill Satan’s ears are “born through the hollow dark,” Satan becomes forever fixed with an empty heart cut off from God (2.953). Man, on the other hand, is given grace after the fall, which allows his heart to have the capacity to be softened. In *Paradise Lost*, God tells his Son that even after Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit, “Man shall not quite be lost” because man’s heart is not completely empty, but still possesses some vital warmth and the capacity to accept God’s Spirit:

for I will cleer thir senses dark,  
 What may suffice, and soft’n stonie hearts  
 To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.  
 To prayer, repentance, and obedience due,  
 Though but endevord with sincere intent,  
 Mine eare shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.  
 And I will place within them as a guide  
 My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,  
 Light after light well us’d they shall attain,  
 And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (3.188-97)

If man hears God’s calling and chooses to “pray, repent, and bring obedience due,” God will allow his heart to be softened. According to *Paradise Lost*, God’s “Umpire Conscience” serves as God’s appointed judge of man’s heart who verifies if man truly is contrite.<sup>37</sup> God’s Spirit inside man’s heart does not make decisions; he offers guidance to help man persist until the end, serving as judge to confirm man’s own disobedience and hard heart. Unlike the fallen, hollow-hearted angels, Milton allows man to return to a state of grace through the active essence of the

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 2:12-16 explains that man’s conscience is the work of law, either right or wrong, written in man’s hearts. Man’s thoughts either accuse or excuse them based on their conscience: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Romans 2: 14-15).

Spirit working inside man's heart "If they will hear" (3.195). Isaiah 57:15 similarly explains that God sends his spirit to live "with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."<sup>38</sup> After the Fall, the angels fear Adam and Eve will become like the fallen fiends, "already vain and void," but the angels learn that fallen man "soon shall find forbearance" because they do not possess hollow hearts, but rather possess hardened hearts that have the capacity to change consistency (10.50). Like alloys, man is not as conductive as gold or angels and therefore is not as readily prone to both extreme refinement and utter hollowness. However, Adam and Eve must "to the end persist"; for if they choose not to persist, they "shall never taste' / But hard be harde'nd, blind be blinded more, / That they may stumble on, and deeper fall" and be as the arch-fiends in hell (3.197, 3.199-201). According to Milton's monism, Adam and Eve must change spiritually and physically, for to Milton, the hardening and softening of the heart are not merely metaphors but occur simultaneously with spiritual change.

While man's heart can change to become more fleshy and God-centered, the angels in heaven enjoy attenuated, material bodies, as well as hearts that are so refined and pure that they can mix with one another. Raphael explains to Adam,

Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st  
 (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy  
 In eminence, and obstacle find none  
 Of membrane, joynt, or limb, exclusive barrs:  
 Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,  
 Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure  
 Desiring; nor restrain'd conveyance need  
 As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul (8.622-9)

The angels enjoy sexual union without the obstacles of "membrane, joynt, or limb," completely mixing their entire pure essences with each other. Just as gases easily integrate, the angels who

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<sup>38</sup> Evidence that man is not hollow because the essence of the Holy Spirit lives inside of him can also be found in 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Galatians 6:15.



consist of high levels of vital warmth intermix freely and effortlessly. To take this a step further, because “All heart they live,” the angels enjoy sex as a joining of their hearts—a pure union of all their forms, will, desires, and essence simultaneously. As explained by Raphael, angels communicate intuitively while men most commonly communicate through verbal language: “discourse / Is ofttest yours, the latter [intuition] most is ours, / Differing but in degree, of kind the same” (5.488-90). The angels’ intuitive communication allows the angels to know each others’ hearts more directly and completely. Raphael further explains that angels are not male or female, and

Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft  
And uncompounded is their Essence pure,  
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joynt or limb,  
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,  
Like cumbrous flesh; (1.423-7)

Milton’s angels have material bodies that make them unlike his contemporaries’ descriptions of angels; however, Milton’s angels’ bodies are “so soft / And uncompounded” that they border on not physically existing.<sup>39</sup> Milton knows that for centuries angels had been described as incorporeal beings;<sup>40</sup> yet, he also knows that in the seventeenth century, with the rise of empirical science and the inventions of the microscope and telescope, the idea of anything—even angels—being incorporeal is under attack; Milton understands that people want to see and experience everything in the material world. He knows he must address and confront Descartes’s and Hobbes’s emerging materialist theories; thus, he describes angels as physically existing but he explains that they are not “ti’d or manacl’d with joynt or limb” and that they

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<sup>39</sup> Fallon explains that Milton’s contemporaries all conceptualize angels as incorporeal beings whereas Milton goes out of his way to describe his angels with material bodies (148).

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Heywood’s *Heirarchy of the Blessed Angells* (1635) describes angels as incorporeal (214). Du Bartas also describes angels in *Semaines* as immaterial (*Summa theologia* I, Q. 50, art. 1).

posses God's vital warmth (1.425). Raphael explains that angels taste, digest, and assimilate food just as man does:

and food alike those pure  
Intelligential substances require  
As doth your Rational; and both contain  
Within them every lower facultie  
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,  
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate. (5.406-11)

Milton's angels are "Intelligential substance" that intuitively understand each other and God because their hearts are more aligned and in accord with each other by nature. Milton's angels possess a physical shape that performs the same functions as man, but those functions are performed in a more refined way. Milton does not mention that angels have stomachs or intestines; he merely states that they eat and digest food in their own rarefied way. Because they are "Spirits that live throughout / Vital in every part," their interiors would look more like a fluid gas—or extremely refined, stretched gold—than a physical combination of organs. Milton creates a new understanding of angels that fits his monism; yet, we must remember that, unlike Harvey, who had many opportunities to dissect human bodies, Milton did not have the opportunity to literally dissect an angel. Thus, Milton's description of an angel's consistency and interiority, while innovative and elaborate, must be attenuated. Milton could not look to experiments to better understand the nature of angels, but he could, and he did, look to scientific experiments, such as Harvey's, to better make sense of the world and creation surrounding him.

Just as Milton's angels enjoy human activities such as having sex and eating, Adam and Eve enjoy the angelic characteristic of having "one heart" (8.499). Just as "Spirits embrace, / Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure / Desiring," Adam and Eve are described as having "one Flesh, one Heart, one Soule":

I now see  
Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self  
Before me; Woman is her Name, of Man  
Extracted; for this cause he shall forgoe  
Father and Mother, and to his Wife adhere;  
And they shall be one Flesh, one Heart, one Soule. (8.494-9)

Genesis 2:24 uses the same wording concerning a husband and a wife being “one flesh”:

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” However, Genesis does not refer to Adam and Eve as having “one Heart, one Soule.” The phrase “One Heart, one Soule” is only used once in the New Testament, where it refers specifically to the Holy Spirit filling the hearts of a group of Apostles:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (Acts 4:31-32)

Milton accentuates that Adam and Eve not only enjoy “one flesh” during sex but also are “one flesh” because Eve was created from Adam’s rib. Milton also describes Adam and Eve as having “one Heart, one Soule,” even before the Fall and before God gives them his “Umpire Conscience” in their hearts (8.499, 3.195).<sup>41</sup> Milton thus complicates the boundary between men and angels when he aligns Adam and Eve more closely with the spirit-filled apostles in the New Testament as well as the airy-bodied angels who are “United as one individual Soule / For ever happie” with God’s Son in order to more fluidly bridge the gap in how seventeenth-century people thought about men and angels (5.610-11). Milton wanted people to believe angels both

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<sup>41</sup> Jeremiah 32:38-40: “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” Ezekiel 11:19: “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.”

physically and spiritually exist so that they could reject the contemporary materialist theories and believe in monism and the existence of a loving, present God.

Like the New Testament Apostles who “were of one heart and of one soul,” Adam knows in his heart when Eve eats the forbidden fruit even though he is separated from her:

Adam the while  
Waiting desirous her return, had wove  
Of choicest Flours a Garland to adorne  
Her Tresses, and her rural labours crown,  
As Reapers oft are wont thir Harvest Queen.  
Great joy he promis'd to his thoughts, and new  
Solace in her return, so long delay'd;  
Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill,  
Misgave him; hee the faultring measure felt; (9.838-46)

When Eve eats the fruit, Adam’s entire disposition changes because he shares “One Heart” with Eve. The story in Genesis never makes this claim, yet Milton repeatedly reminds the reader that Adam and Eve are joined both spiritually and physically. Even when physically separated, Adam feels Eve’s “faultring measure” in his heart and knows “something ill” has occurred (9.846, 9.854). He does not feel the change in his brain or liver; he is shaken in his heart.

After Eve eats the fruit, it appears as if Adam contemplates his choice either to eat the fruit and be with Eve, or abandon Eve and remain sinless. However, Milton knows his audience is familiar with the biblical story and has been trained to know the outcome of the story; Adam outwardly contemplates his choices through discourse but intuitively already knows in his heart, much like the reader, that he is bound to be lost with Eve:

How can I live without thee, how forgoe  
Thy sweet Converse and Love so dearly joyn'd,  
To live again in these wilde Woods forlorn?  
Should God create another *Eve*, and I  
Another Rib afford, yet loss of thee  
Would never from my heart; no no, I feel  
The Link of Nature draw me: Flesh of Flesh,

Bone of my Bone thou art, and from thy State  
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe. (9.908-16)

Adam explains that the “loss of [Eve] / Would never [leave his] heart,” accentuating that when Eve sins he immediately feels a loss of connection with her in his heart. At this moment, Eve’s heart is drained of vital warmth and is different both physically and spiritually than Adam’s heart. Less than fifty lines later, Adam nearly repeats his lament and chooses to fall with Eve because he imagines that the force in his heart and “Bond of Nature” that draws him to Eve makes her a literal part of his flesh and bones; but before he chooses to fall, it is the lack of Eve in his heart he feels and not a draining of God’s vital warmth, for he still has to choose his fate.

However I with thee have fixt my Lot,  
Certain to undergoe like doom, if Death  
Consort with thee, Death is to mee as Life;  
So forcible within my heart I feel  
The Bond of Nature draw me to my owne,  
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;  
Our State cannot be severd, we are one,  
One Flesh; to loose thee were to loose my self. (9.952-9)

While Adam refers to his heart feeling “The Bond of Nature draw me to my owne,” he only refers to himself and Eve being “one Flesh” in this passage, not “One Heart, one Soule” (8.499). Eve has eaten the forbidden fruit and Adam acknowledges that their once unified heart is now severed. Even after Adam chooses to fall with Eve their union of “One Heart” crumbles and they are less like the angels who “total . . . mix” (8.627). Not only have they spiritually fallen away from God but they have also physically changed: Adam’s heart immediately turns to stone, and Eve is overcome with blushing cheeks, which is a sign of her feverish, unbalanced heart.

When Adam intuitively knows that Eve has sinned and he subsequently chooses to fall with her, Adam becomes “astonied,” which reflects that his once fleshy heart has hardened due to his sin:

Adam, soon as he heard  
 Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill  
 Ran through his veins, and all his joynts relax'd;  
 From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for EVE  
 Down drop'd, and all the faded Roses shed:  
 Speechless he stood and pale. (9.889-94)

Both Adam and Eve are transformed into beings immoderate in their thoughts and bodies. Due to the fall, man's angel-like characteristic of sharing "One Heart" is broken; Adam's and Eve's one heart separates and each of their hearts change to opposite extremes: Eve's heart is overcome with carnal desires and "in her Cheek distemper flushing glowd" (9.887). Adam gives in to his sensual appetite and is described with a "distemperd brest" that is "estrang'd in look and alterd stile" (9.1131-2). Both show signs of an unhealthy heart, for Eve's heart burns with unquenchable fire while Adam's heart is engrossed with a "horror chill / [that] Ran through his veins" (9.890-1). Both are physically and spiritually unbalanced and have broken their accord not only with each other but also with their perfect creator. As the intoxicating fruit takes over their senses and transforms their hearts, Adam and Eve spend the evening in passionate lust only to awaken with the shameful weight of their recent sin and the damning knowledge in their hearts that they have lost paradise.<sup>42</sup> The act of eating the fruit affects their spiritual and material bodies simultaneously:

Soon as the force of that fallacious Fruit,  
 That with exhilarating vapor bland  
 About thir spirits had play'd, and inmost powers  
 Made err, was now exhal'd, and grosser sleep

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<sup>42</sup> Milton creates Satan, Satan's daughter Sin, and Satan's Grandson Death, to share a similar heart connection that Adam and Eve shared. Like Adam who "divine[s] of something ill" in his heart when Eve eats of the forbidden fruit, Sin tells Satan that she knew of his success on Earth because her "Heart divin'd" it (9.845, 10.356-7). In addition, much like Adam's relationship with Eve prior to the Fall, Sin explains that her heart moves with Satan's heart "by a secret harmonie" (10.357). Satan and Sin are "join'd in connexion sweet" precisely when Adam's and Eve's "One Heart" is splintered (10.358, 8.499). Unlike Adam and Eve, Sin tells Satan that her heart "still moves with thine" after the Fall (10.358). After the birth of Sin, Sin tells Satan that although there were distant "worlds between" them, she felt Satan's heart through the expanse, which thus generated in her their son, Death (10.362). The "fatal consequence" of Adam and Eve being divided in their heart and separated from God, not only creates Sin and Death, but "unites" the hollow hearts of Satan, Sin, and Death (10.364).

Bred of unkindly fumes, with conscious dreams  
Encumber'd, now had left them, up they rose,  
As from unrest, and each the other viewing,  
Soon found thir Eyes how op'n'd, and thir minds  
How dark'n'd. (9.1046-54)

After their night of lust and selfish revelry, Adam and Eve awake physically and spiritually altered. In their desire to be more like God and the angels—to be more knowledgeable and airy—Adam and Eve eat the fruit that God himself created and temporarily become more refined by the “exhilarating vapor” that “about thir spirits . . . play/d” (9.1047-8). Adam and Eve briefly gain airiness, but the “vapor” is soon “exhal'd” and they are left with “unkindly fumes” that plague their “grosser sleep” (9.1053, 9.1049). When asleep, they become more thick and heavy, emphasizing that their transformation is more than just a change in their minds but a change that encompasses their entire monistic being. They are eventually “encumbered,” rise up from “unrest,” are physically grosser, and have darkened, independent, and isolated minds and selves rather than unified hearts focused on God (9.1051-2). They resemble the devils in hell who “Lie thus astonished on the oblivious Pool” knowing not what to do or where to go because their hearts are drained of vivifying life, no longer attuned to God.

Unlike Descartes and Hobbes, who transform the heart into a mechanical pump void of consciousness, Milton believes that God values a man's heart over everything else. Milton refers to the heart sixty-two times in *Paradise Lost* and over two hundred times in *Christian Doctrine*. Milton refers to the brain not even once in either *Paradise Lost* or *Christian Doctrine*. For Milton, the heart is the place where man decides if he believes in God. If the heart is devalued or de-spiritualized, Milton understands that this undermines his Christian belief that God communicates with mortals through the heart. For Milton, everything is centered on an “upright heart and pure” that is found through trial to be dedicated to God (*PL* 1.18).

Furthermore, it is imperative for Milton that in his heart man has the capacity to choose virtue. Unlike Hobbes's theory of mechanical materialism, Milton's monism gives matter free will. After creation, choices are left to the individual:

God made thee perfect, not immutable;  
And good he made thee, but to persevere  
He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will  
By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate  
Inextricable, or strict necessity;  
Our voluntarie service he requires,  
Not our necessitated, such with him  
Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how  
Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve  
Willing or no, who will but what they must  
By Destinie, and can no other choose?  
My self and all th' Angelic Host that stand  
In sight of God enthron'd, our happie state  
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;  
On other surety none; freely we serve.  
Because wee freely love, as in our will  
To love or not; in this we stand or fall: (5.524-40)

Milton does not give all causation to God. Man is mutable and must consistently persevere to remain in God's service, whether that is through action or waiting. Man's heart is the center of his will, which is "By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate / Inextricable" (5.527-8). Milton references man's "will" five times in the passage above to emphasize that man is free to choose his own course. Milton also links man's will with the heart, emphasizing that hearts must be free as well as tried "whether they serve willing or no." A tested heart and will that freely serve God is the epitome of love and obedience. Hearts must have the capacity to change, to harden or soften, to "stand or fall," according to man's choices and desires; this capacity allows man to serve freely rather than by force. Rogers explains, "For republican and sectarian dabblers in natural philosophy, such as Milton, matter was endued at the Creation with a divinely sanctioned capacity for self-motion, virtue, and perhaps even reason" (12). I contend that Milton advocates



in his later works that matter has the capacity for self-motion, virtue, and undoubtedly reason. God's motions are in Adam, but they do not control Adam. There is a synthesis of God's spirit inside man's heart working together with man's freedom to choose: an "accord" or "joining of hearts" between God and man.<sup>43</sup> God's spirit inside Adam's heart helps guide him, but it does not mechanically control him.

Similar to Saint Paul's belief that man is not a composite creature of soul and body, but rather "flesh-animated-by-soul, the whole conceived as a psycho-physical unity," Milton believes, and emphasizes in his later writings, that the heart is the homogeneous core of man that is both material and spiritual at the same time (Robinson 14). Milton in *Paradise Lost* describes a world where composite creatures exist in order to illuminate his personal belief in monism, to uphold his theology that an ever-present God exists, and to showcase man's heart as the physical and spiritual center of his being that can be filled with God's vital warmth. While acknowledging the emerging theories that threaten his beliefs, Milton foregrounds his theological beliefs and emphasizes the heart as a place of belief, consciousness, and will. Milton realizes that Hobbes's theories fail to explain how matter can think and Descartes's theories fail to explain adequately how the mind and body communicate. The heart for Milton is thus both the physical and spiritual core of man that cannot be displaced, for dethroning the heart would destroy Milton's belief that man is created by God and sustained by God through his living spirit working within him.

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<sup>43</sup> The word "accord" is reflected in the theology of Psalms 17:8: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." When the Lord talks to a believer, scripture states that the believer hears it in his heart and responds.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HEART AND BOOK: “WITH DEEP IMPRESSION TOOK”

Throughout the seventeenth century the book industry grew at staggering rates. The eighty-four years between 1556-1640 saw 26,736 works produced; the sixty years between 1641-1700 netted 75,285 works (*Cambridge Histories* 557). From 1576-1655, fifty-one total freemen were a part of the provincial book trade, but from just 1656-1695, there were a record seventy-three (*Cambridge History* 793). The number of booksellers as well as the imports of paper into London increased substantially in the seventeenth century. In 1560, imports amounted to 26,432 reams, compared with 87,931 reams in 1630 alone and 165,078 reams in 1699 (*Cambridge History* 19). John Barnard explains,

The 1640s and 1650s were a period of innovation. The employment of the press for propaganda on both sides, the invention of the periodical press, the beginning of Parliamentary printing, Peter Stent's popular prints, John Playford's new song book form for music publishing, and the use of subscription to support the publication of large scholarly ventures like Dugdale's antiquarian researches or Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible, all represent new developments. So too the proselytizing activities of Hartlib circle, the popularization and demystification of the medical profession by Nicholas Culpeper and his bookseller, Peter Cole, the substantial number of biblical commentaries published by future non-conformist divines, and the works published by Quakers and by other anti-establishment groups and writers, similarly point to the years of the Civil War and Interregnum as a time at which new publishing openings were being explored, new middling audiences being created, and in which public opinion was increasingly formed through the press. (22-3)

This continual growth throughout the seventeenth century caused people to question if the mass production of books was a favorable or adverse change for the English people, just as the growth of the Internet and electronic media raise similar questions today.

In the seventeenth century, at the same time that one of the first manifestations of the industrial revolution generates a fear of mass production, a theological movement that rages in England, largely based on Protestant and nonconformists doctrines, values a more individualized belief centered on the importance of internal worship and personal communion with God. As the book trade expanded, so did ideas and public expression; however, the growth of mass-produced, public communication brought into question the acceptability of visual and more structured forms of worship. Non-Catholic believers pushed against the movement to publicize every aspect of their lives and often retreated to a belief in more personal and intimate forms of worship. Herbert's and Milton's descriptions of the heart reflect and amplify the anxieties concerning the growing book industry, as well as the shift to more personal beliefs. We can see these two discourses intertwined in "Jordan II" when Herbert writes that he must bypass poetic clichés and look directly to the "sweetnesse readie penn'd" in his heart and "copy out only that, and save expense" (17-18). Here, Herbert transforms the interior heart into a material object in order to connect spiritual beliefs with physical life, while simultaneously devaluing the artificial "inventions" of poetry, which, I will argue, are inventions both old and new. Herbert does not want his words to be laden with hackneyed metaphors and standard poetical "trim inventions," nor does he want his poems to be manufactured and "decked with sense [cents] as if it were to sell" (6). By weaving in economic terms such as "expense," and "sense," Herbert emphasizes that he values the heart as an internal, personal book written upon by God's Spirit more than a material book written to be printed, mass-produced, and sold.

Similar to Herbert's questioning of both old and new "trim inventions," Milton wrestles with how to describe the heart as a divinely inscribed text when he has both an apprehension and an excitement about the explosion of print. How can a religious poet concerned with the importance of God personally writing on each heart confront the choice of either mass producing his own religious poetry or continuing to personally handwrite his poems in the more intimate manuscript form? Milton overcomes any fears he may have had concerning mass production, believing that he could utilize the efficient vehicle of print to more productively express the prophetic words that burned in his heart. Utilizing mass production allowed Milton to reach more people, for though Milton was not concerned with augmenting his personal fame, he aspired to stir readers to intimately know God in their hearts. By choosing to have his works printed, Milton more productively combated the opposing contemporary philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes and worked to promote the heart as the most vital book that will outlive physical books and monuments. Additionally, Milton's eventual blindness limited his ability to physically write his works. Unlike Herbert's descriptions of the heart, Milton's descriptions show that he openly accepts the growing book industry, while, at the same time, he upholds the more traditional theological belief that the writing on a person's heart represents a divine publication that cannot be copied or mass-produced by man (*PL* 12.524, *PL* 2.238, *Areopagitica* 189). By focusing on how Herbert and Milton describe the heart, this chapter examines how these two poets navigate the intersection of an economic and cultural discussion concerning the production and marketing of books, as well as a theological and social discourse concerning the nature of belief and faith.

## HERBERT'S GRACEFULLY COLLIDING HEARTS

In the opening sonnet of Sidney's revered *Astrophel and Stella*, Sidney's speaker realizes he must "look in [his] heart, and write" (14). Herbert offers a similarly "easy" solution to the problem of how to write poetry in "Jordan II" by admitting that he needs to look in his heart and "copie out only that, and save expense" (18); however, through the course of many of his poems, Herbert reveals that "copying out" the immaterial divine love inscribed in his heart into a material form is problematic, if not impossible. Herbert yearns to "copie out only that"—the inscription of love written in a believer's heart—but he struggles to understand how a person can actually succeed in transcribing divine, intimately written love. Herbert resolves to first incorporate ordinary objects to make visible and audible appeals to man's desires in his poetry, and then, more important, transform more mystical objects, such as the interior heart, into material objects in order to connect spiritual beliefs with physical life.<sup>44</sup> Herbert's solution is to intertwine references to the physical and spiritual worlds, but he does not offer convincing scientific logic of how these two diverse realms can actually meet. Anne-Marie Miller Blaise explains that "Herbert, like Augustine before him, rejects the Neo-Platonic notion that one can ascend from corporeal to spiritual reality thanks to reason or philosophers' knowledge alone (11).<sup>45</sup> Blaise further argues that Herbert uses visible and audible appeals to the senses because Herbert is acutely aware of man's fallen nature and man's inability to trust in reason only (10). I

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<sup>44</sup> Scott Manning Stevens, in "Sacred Heart and Secular Brain" in *Body in Parts*, (Rutledge 1997), explores the connection between the heart and brain in Renaissance culture (262-82). Stevens explains why the heart was often privileged over the brain at this time. Barbara Lewalski has looked at how the heart functioned as a symbol in the Early Modern Period and shows in *Protestant Poetics* (179-212) that the heart was considered a more passive receptor of God's grace compared to the brain. It is interesting to note that most scholars concentrate on the disembodied sacred heart of Christ instead of how Christ acts upon other disembodied hearts. Lewalski is an exception, for she does include references to both.

<sup>45</sup> Carol Harrison in *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) comments on Augustine's conviction about "man's inability to reach divine Truth or Beauty without faith, and love for, divine Authority, as revealed to him in the temporal realm, in the form which constitutes at once the being and beauty of Creation, of man, of history, and supremely, of the Incarnate" (20).

contend that due to Herbert's belief that man is so far removed from the spiritual realm, Herbert purposefully attempts to connect the spiritual to the physical in his poetry so that crossing this perplexing boundary is less of a leap of faith for his reader. However, by not clearly explaining how one can cross such a boundary, Herbert essentially requires his reader to take a leap of faith. Blaise shows that Herbert incorporates appeals to the senses in his poetry; I argue that Herbert uses these appeals specifically to attempt to narrow the gap between the physical and spiritual realms. By alternating between images of a physically material heart and an immaterial interior heart, Herbert endeavors to offer a heavenly glimpse of the future when there will be no boundary between man and his maker, between the physical and spiritual worlds, between "Thine and Mine" ("Clasping of Hands" 20). Yet, by not choosing to publish his poems during his life, Herbert shows his apprehension towards the growing book industry and the material mass production of books. Herbert's desire for God to intimately write on his own heart reveals his nostalgia to localize belief in the intimate sphere of the heart.

While scholars such as Richard Strier in *Love Known* discuss Herbert's understanding of the heart, scholars have yet to discuss how Herbert, a poet who does not incorporate the monist beliefs that Milton later accepts, fluctuates between interior and exterior hearts. Scholars have yet to examine how Herbert's desire to meld the physical and spiritual characteristics of the heart leads up to the monist belief of his successors, such as Milton. Herbert attempts both to look inside of hearts and also to remove hearts from the physical body in order to shed light on the connection between the divine and the material. By looking at Herbert's poems "Jordan II," and "Love Unknown," I will show that Herbert does not limit the heart to a spiritual sphere of emotions and beliefs, but often materializes the heart as an object that is written upon, physically afflicted, and materially softened. By describing the heart as a physical and palpable text,

Herbert links the act of writing with the power of God's Spirit and attenuates the boundary between the physical and metaphysical realms while still retaining a belief in dualism. Herbert thus navigates the theological, social, economic, and scientific discourses concerning the nature and belief of faith in his descriptions of the heart.

Like many poets before him, Herbert writes poems that grapple with the perplexing riddle of how to express one's thoughts and beliefs in written language. In the beginning of "Jordan II," originally titled "Invention" in manuscript *W*, Herbert begins with a tactical move, similar to Sidney's contemplation of the value of poetic ornamentation:<sup>46</sup>

When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,  
Such was their lustre, they did so excell,  
That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;  
My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,  
Curling with metaphors a plain intention,  
Decking the sense, as if it were to sell. (1-6)

At first, Herbert portrays himself as enamored with his "lines of heav'nly joys" and "their luster," but it is only the art and not the content that he finds alluring (1-2).<sup>47</sup> By using "luster," Herbert points to the attractive charm and seductive pleasure of his lines, showing that his art possesses an outward shine and only produces a superficial "lust" in the reader. Herbert also seeks out "quaint words and trim invention" and finds his thoughts beginning to "burnish, sprout, and swell," but his lines are only superficially attractive and growing in ornate words but not intimate meaning (3, 4). His words lack substance and a connection to the lasting and divine beliefs rooted deep in his heart. He admits that his ornamented lines quickly grow and multiply, but he is not interested in creating vast quantities of wanton lines that possess outward splendor,

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<sup>46</sup> Many critics agree that Herbert rejects poetic ornamentation in "Jordan II." F. E. Hutchinson suggests that Herbert may be expressing "his attraction, for his own use at any rate, to a simpler manner of expression than the intellectual subtleties affected by Donne" (495). Philip McGuire in "Herbert's 'Jordan II' and the Plain Style" *MichA* 1 (1969): 69-74 contends that Herbert's rejection of ornamentation was consistent with the Renaissance belief in a plain style.

<sup>47</sup> Stanley Fish explains that the syntax in the first two lines, and the textual variants in manuscript *W*, reveals the "confusion in [Herbert's] thought of a concern for God with a concern for the art he would offer God" (*Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) 197.

just as he is not primarily concerned with publishing and mass producing his poems during his lifetime, “as if [they] were to sell” (6). Like the Biblical Abel whom Herbert refers to in the opening lines of *The Temple* and who offers God a pleasing sacrifice rooted in a genuine desire to honor God, Herbert wants his offering to have internal worth rather than external worth. He longs for his poems to be his choicest harvest that will please God, not the leftover crops or surplus stacks of mass-produced books that are void of individual meaning and worth. He wants to create more than a visibly appealing poem; he wants to create a divinely inspired utterance that is grounded in his spiritual beliefs and thus engenders personal spiritual growth and growth in others. He adds that his verse has become “lustrous,” or “bright and glossy due to polishing with a tool,” but he knows that working with physical tools such as pens, ink, paper, and assuredly printing presses will not create the type of poem he wants to write.

For Herbert, writing poetry must begin in the heart and grow out of the spiritual impression written by God. Herbert’s heart must be the initial paper and Christ’s sacrificial blood must be the fundamental ink. Working with physical tools such as paper and ink, or engraved letters and printing presses, will not produce the desired life-giving poetry that must originate in the heart. Herbert’s quickly sprouting words laden with earthly craft and ingenuity are insufficient. Furthermore, Herbert attests that he does not aspire “to sell” his verse; rather, he desires to receive God’s heavenly inspiration by learning how to read the divinely written inscription in his heart. The production of a mercantile commodity—earthly inspired verse—is at odds with his goal to write generative poetry inspired by God. For Herbert, not having his poems published insures that they are genuine, like Abel’s offering. Yet, like Virgil and other poets who shun the reproduction of their works while alive, Herbert leaves open the opportunity for his



verse to be published after his death, which allows for them to be read and mass-produced after his death, and thus, to continually propagate.

In the second stanza, Herbert further laments the excess of ornate, thought-based verse that overpowers his mind, explaining,

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne,  
Off'ring their service, if I were not sped:  
I often blotted what I had begunne;  
This was not quick enough, and that was dead. (7-10)

These “Thousands of notions” emanate from his brain, not his heart. He is keenly aware that his mind has produced numerous thoughts and ideas that he does not trust or revere. He further realizes his sin-bound thoughts and artificial poetic inventions are “not quick enough” or are “dead” (10). He knows his verse is impotent and will not create vitality in him or any who read his poems after his death; he is frustrated that his “curling metaphors” of lavish superficial decoration are all lifeless and spiritually uninspiring. He further bemoans that his lines ineptly “offered their service,” but he knows they are not adequate offerings. They do not exemplify the “living sacrifice” revered by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Herbert wants his poetry both to be pregnant with life and to be “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1). He wants his poetry to transcend the physical world, but he does not know how to make that leap when his poetry is grounded in the notions in his mind and not the inscription in his heart.

Frustrated with his uninspired poetry, Herbert confesses that he “often blotted what [he] had begunne” (9). He “spotted and stained with ink” his lines of poetry because they were inadequate (*OED* “blotted” def 1). As we will see in his poem “Good Friday,” which I will discuss in chapter five, Herbert repeatedly contemplates the physical blotting and, even at times, the burning of his poetry. He is acutely aware of his poem’s physical presence, as well as the physical tools such as ink and paper involved in writing poems, and often considers destroying

his work due to its inadequacy and existence in the physical realm. Even on his deathbed, Herbert sends his large collection of poems to his friend Nicholas Ferrar and tells him to either publish the poems if he thought they might “turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul,” or to otherwise burn them.<sup>48</sup> Herbert struggles with how to craft verse that is at once bound to the imperfect physical world but also reflective of a spiritually inspiring text that leads readers to understand divine love. This is evident in “Jordan II” when Herbert uses “blotted” in the middle line of the poem to both paint a picture of a stained and ruined text and to allude to the preceding poem, “Miserie,” where sinful life is described as “a constant blot” that can consume a life (63). By including the phrase “blotted what I had begunne,” Herbert articulates his fear that his name could be forever removed from the Book of Life if he does not learn to express his beliefs with a spiritual acuteness rather than a material dullness. Herbert would rather destroy his poetry so that at the Second Coming, Christ “will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but will confess his name before [his] Father, and before his angels” as a faithful servant of Christ (Revelation 3:5). Herbert painfully knows that his verse, left to his own “contrivances and fabrications” in his mind, is materially grounded and thus blemished (*OED* “invention” def. 4a). Yet, Herbert wants his name inscribed in the ultimate Book of Life to show that he is a genuine believer concerned not with outward fame but internal belief. He values God’s Book that records those who are spiritually alive while lamenting his physical book that is void of life. Herbert struggles to bridge the gap between his maker’s Book and his book, for he is unwilling to think in monistic terms like Milton and accept that all matter is imbued with “vital warmth”; Herbert chooses to remain faithful to what he believes to be the dualistic reality of earth, not accepting that all matter is both physical and spiritual.

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<sup>48</sup> A. W. Barnes discusses Herbert’s relationship with Ferrar in “Editing George Herbert’s Ejaculations.” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 1.2 (2006): 90-113.

In the final stanza of “Jordan II,” Herbert admits that he desperately poured his “self” into his poems: “So did I weave my self into the sense” (14). His own sinfulness, vanity, and lifeless invention weigh down his poems. Just as he explains in the poem “Man’s Medley” that “To this life things of sense / Make their pretense,” he understands in “Jordan II” that looking to his own fallen “sense” and nature is woefully insufficient (7-8).<sup>49</sup> “Sense” here registers as a physical “organ of sense,” a materially based object (*OED* “sense” def 1b); he equates his verse not with a spiritual power or vital warmth but with “the faculties of physical perception or sensation” (*OED* “sense” def 1c). He asserts his poems lack the higher faculty of spirit.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, left to his own devices, Herbert believes his poetry is not a fitting sacrifice to God and will not prompt appropriate sacrifice in his readers. His fallen nature mars his art, grounding it in the material world of physical things rather than the transcendent world of spiritual emotions and divine love.

It is not until Herbert hears his friend, Christ, whisper, “*How wide is all this long pretense! / There is in love sweetnesse readie penn’d / Copie out onely that, and save expense,*” that he believes he has discovered how to write poetry that is “quick” and swelling with impregnating life, much like the life-giving “Vital principle” Harvey describes in his 1628 treatise, *On the Circulation of the Blood*, discussed in chapter two (16-18). Herbert here imagines Christ as occupying two spaces: he is both a spiritual savior and an earthly friend. He rules as royalty in heaven, but exists as an intimate friend who speaks with man on earth. Christ bridges the gap between the spiritual and physical worlds that Herbert so desperately wants to

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<sup>49</sup> This is similar to Paul’s preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:10-16: “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.”

<sup>50</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:6 explains, “It is the spirit which gives life.”

connect. But how does fallen man “copie out onely *that*”? How does man reproduce and write in earthly terms “*that*”—the divine inscription of love written by God? Herbert struggles with how to read what has been divinely inscribed in his heart and then how to transcribe it into a material poem. “Jordan II” does not explain *how* to “copie out” that which has been “readie penn’d” and written in “the fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).<sup>51</sup> The poem merely explains that a believer must perform the action of copying rather than creating. Herbert eventually realizes he must copy God’s own invention, but is this really an elementary task? Throughout *The Temple*, Herbert struggles with knowing exactly how to avoid copying the classic poets or, like Sidney, copying the carnal thoughts generated in his mind, and learning instead how to copy God’s divine impression of love in his heart.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, Herbert struggles with knowing if or how poets should distribute their poems for others to read.

This same question of *how* appears in the poem “The Thanksgiving.” Herbert asks: “But how shall I imitate thee, and / Copie thy fair, though bloodie hand?” (21-2). Herbert is indeed struggling with the challenge to transcribe into physical words the divine love of Christ. The use of the verbs “imitate” and “copie” in these lines, as well as the personal pronoun “I,” reinforces Herbert’s emphasis on the private, physical act of handwriting, not the act of using a printing press or having his works transcribed by others in a large coterie circle. For Herbert, the printing press and the idea of mass production created an unwanted distance between the author and his readers. The printing press mechanized the process of personally creating texts. While Herbert acknowledges his painful struggle to write his verse, he nevertheless valued the intimate process

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<sup>51</sup> Anne-Marie Miller Blaise states that the phrase “Sweetnesse readie penn’d” is readily understood by many critics as referring to Scripture. Thus for them, Herbert’s sole literary model becomes the Bible” (“Herbert’s Theology and Beauty,” *George Herbert Journal*; 27, 10). I want to assert that the “Sweetnesse readie penn’d” is, even more specifically, the inscription written in the heart of believers.

<sup>52</sup> This is Herbert’s Romans 7: 22-24 dilemma. He doesn’t know how to disengage from the bondage of material, earthly nature and engage and express the joyful concurrence of his inner man with God’s life and Spirit within. Also found in Romans 8: 1-2.

of searching his heart and privately transcribing his poems on paper. Just as Herbert avoided having his works printed during his lifetime, Herbert, unlike Donne, did not actively circulate his manuscripts to a large coterie circle; Herbert preferred a private coterie that consisted of himself and God (Pebworth 24).

In “Jordan II,” Herbert aims to copy Christ’s handwriting that came to life from Christ’s shedding of blood on the cross. By referencing Christ’s “bloodie hand,” Herbert not only alludes to Christ’s nail-pierced hands but also connects Christ’s suffering to the act of writing (22, *OED hand*, def 16). Through this corporal reference to a hand, Herbert links the physical act of writing (and Christ’s human hand) to his longing to understand and record divine love in dualistic terms. Herbert understands that reproducing immaterial love in material language is not a simple task of translation because he believes in the distinction of the spiritual and physical worlds, yet he continually grounds his discussion of divine love in physical images and the act of writing in order to try to connect the spiritual and physical realms. Herbert alludes to the enigma of “copie[ing] out onely” the inscription of God’s love in his heart in “The Flower” when he abruptly comments, “Thy word is all, if we could spell” (21). Herbert contemplates how a person is to “spell” divine love. How is one to name and order the letters of something that has no clear letters? Or, if spell is deciphered as “To preach,” (*OED spell* def 1a), how is Herbert to preach God’s message in his own poems? Herbert answers his own questions in his poem “Love Unknown” when he learns not to just “copie out,” but to allegorically *take out* his heart and ultimately accept Christ’s “expense” rather than trying fruitlessly to “save [his own] expense” or accept the “expense” of the mercantile book trade (“Jordan II” 18).

Herbert believes at the end of “Jordan II” that he will “save expense” by omitting his “curling metaphors” and swelling inventions, and focusing on “copie[ing] out onely that” which

has been “sweetly readie penn’d.” However, in “Jordan II,” Herbert has not yet realized that, while he may be saving his own expense, as well as not succumbing to the “expense” and “cents” of the growing book industry, he must fully embrace Christ’s “expense” of sacrifice in order to complete the transcribing process. Herbert discovers that his Savior, Christ, is the “logos” who is reason, physical and spiritual breath, and “the Word” (*OED logos* def 1). In Christian terms, Christ is the express image of God’s person. Since this personal friend, Christ, is the visible and audible manifestation of the invisible, he is the perfect vehicle for making the inward observable and audible in man. Herbert shows in his later poems that man needs Christ as a mediator. Nonetheless, Herbert also shows that before he can materialize the immaterial through Christ, he must first return to an extended story, a “long pretense,” in “Love Unknown”; he must begin with a materially based narrative because it is the way to “bait with pleasure” the reader, and it is the first step to begin the process of “copie[ing] out” what has been “readie penn’d” in his heart (“Perirranterium” 4, “Jordan II” 17-8). Due to his dualistic beliefs, Herbert must use the façade of a story in order to combine the physical and spiritual worlds.

#### “COPIE[ING] OUT” LOVE UNKNOWN

In “Jordan II” Herbert writes about the enigmatic process of poetic inspiration by adopting a first-person narrator who can easily be read as Herbert himself. However, Herbert’s longer narrative poem “Love Unknown” has a different structure: it is both a secular story of a landowner and his tenant, and an allegorical sacred story of the softening of the tenant’s heart. By allowing the material and immaterial to intersect in this tale, which is centered on the heart, Herbert creates a bridge from one to the other for the reader. In the opening lines, Herbert points to the elision of boundaries when he has the narrator attempt to explain that he both “had/ And

have” a Lord who loaned him “some grounds which may improve” (3-4). The speaker awkwardly understands his past and ongoing present relationship with his master, because at this point in his self-professed “long and sad” tale he remains unaware that ultimately, the “grounds” he must improve is his heart (1). He tells the listening friend, “I hold [the grounds] for two lives, and both lives in me,” as if trying to explain that he has possessed this land for two generations (5).<sup>53</sup> The speaker’s “two lives” that “both live in him” also point to Herbert’s dualistic belief that man is composed of two distinct essences, one physical and one spiritual. In the story, what the narrator and the reader will come to understand is that these two generations are his physical life on earth and his eternal life in heaven, but early in the poem the narrator fails to understand the complex relationship of his dual nature. He repeatedly misreads his own tale and incorrectly jumps to conclusions about his “Dear Friend,” whom he assumes cannot help him (1). The speaker does not understand that his story is hopeful instead of tragic until the end of the poem when Christ, the narrator’s friend and savior, clarifies the spiritual meaning of his materially grounded tale. For Herbert, Christ’s voice and mediation is the missing link in the process of “copie[ing] out” the inscription of love in his heart, which further substantiates Herbert’s belief that the human heart is the ultimate book, a living text not mechanically produced but written upon by God.

The speaker next explains that he detached his heart from his body and offered it on a plate: “To him I brought a dish of fruit one day,/ And in the middle placed my heart” (6-7). This offering of an internal organ on a plate is startling. Barbara Lewalski explains how a few sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists, such as van Haeften and Montenay, created emblems

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<sup>53</sup> Helen Wilcox in *The English Poems of George Herbert* notes that “hold for two lives” is a “legal reference to the common practice of holding a lease for two generations” (455).

presenting Anima and Divine Love through images of a man offering a heart on a plate.<sup>54</sup> While startling, the disembodied heart that is later “seized” upon and then physically thrown, dipped, dyed, washed, and wrung, serves as a liminal object that can stand for both a material organ and a spiritual example of change (12). By separating the heart from the body, Herbert is able to focus even more on what must occur *to* the heart before one can duplicate what is *in* the heart. The speaker must enter an intimate dialog with Christ and ultimately allow Christ to complete the story.

The offering of fruit on a plate in the beginning of “Love Unknown” also reminds the reader of Cain’s inadequate offering of fruit in Genesis 4:3: “Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.”<sup>55</sup> This offering illuminates the naive speaker’s initial preoccupation with physical objects rather than spiritual sacrifice. According to Genesis, Cain’s gift was not accepted by God because, like the initial verse in “Jordan II,” it was not a meaningful offering that showed a reverence in his heart. Like the poet in the beginning of “Jordan II,” Cain only thought in earthly terms. Moreover, both the speaker in “Jordan II” and Cain offer inappropriate offerings that point to Herbert’s fear that his poetry, if mass-produced or not copied correctly from his heart, could also be inappropriate. In the Old Testament, first fruits of the field were acceptable under the law for certain offerings, but offerings for sin and human failure required more—they required a blood sacrifice that prefigured Christ’s New Testament sacrifice. Cain would have known this; therefore, his offering of fruit did not show sacrifice, but

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<sup>54</sup> Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 206. This narrative story of offering a heart on a plate is also similar to the Biblical story of Salome offering John the Baptist’s head on a platter. His head was a material object and also a picture of the immaterial heart of the wicked Salome, but more specifically of her mother, who initiated the request made of Herod.

<sup>55</sup> This offering of fruit can also be related to the fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden. Fruit is often synonymous with sin, failure, and selfish works; however, there is a difference between natural fruit and supernatural fruit. All works (or fruit) are not wrong. They must be endowed or initiated from Christ. In the New Testament, carnal acts from the “natural” man are seen as works. Spiritual acts are seen as “fruit of the Spirit” manifested through the believer (Galatians 3:19-25).



disdain and selfish conceit.<sup>56</sup> He followed his mind's leading instead of his heart's. Similarly, Herbert may have believed that only his hand-written poems were "first fruits" while mass-produced copies were not authentic offerings. This gesture of presenting fruit to God also paradoxically echoes back to Herbert's dedication to *The Temple*:

Lord, my first fruits present themselves to thee;  
Yet not mine neither: for from thee they came,  
And must return. Accept of them and me,  
And make us strive, who shall sign best thy name. (1-4)

While Cain's gift is an example of an ill-prepared and unacceptable offering, Herbert's dedication gives a very different interpretation of presenting one's "first fruits." Herbert claims his offering of fruit belongs not to him, but rather issued from God and must be returned to God. He emphasizes the importance of the personal exchange between God and himself. Herbert even changes from using the singular pronouns "mine" and "thee" to referring to a plural "us" in the fourth line. Herbert collapses authorship of his poems and suggests that his verse is an exclusive collaboration between his offering and God's already given gifts. In "Love Unknown," the speaker attempts to find this movement towards a type of communion. Whether the poem achieves this harmony is unclear, for the narrator's voice seems to disappear by the end of the poem. Nevertheless, in the opening lines of the poem, Herbert begins with the bloody story of Cain, a lurid "bait of pleasure," and transforms the story of offering an internal organ into an acceptable example of spiritual sacrifice ("Perirranterium" 4). By offering his heart in the middle of a dish of fruit, the narrator simultaneously stands for the fallen, earthly Cain and the forgiven, spiritually inspired poet.

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<sup>56</sup> In the Old Testament, the law came much later than the Genesis creation narrative, but because God made "coverings" for Adam and Eve of animal skin, theologians believe that blood-sacrifices as "covering" for sin was instituted at the fall and Cain would have been cognizant of this.

The master's servant accepts the speaker's gift, although later labeled as "foul," "hard," and "dull," not because his offering is perfect, but because the speaker makes the genuine, intimate gesture of offering his heart. The initial state of the heart is not the issue; the act of offering the core of one's being is the first priority. Once the speaker presents the dish, the Lord "Looked on a servant," who "instantly / Quitting the fruit, seized on [the speaker's] heart alone" (9, 11-12). The master's servant, Christ, knows the Father's will and forcefully takes possession of the speaker's heart. The reader is likely startled by this rather violent attack on the heart, which might remind us of Donne's command in Sonnet XIV to "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" (1). Donne implores God to "batter," or "strike continuously and violently" (*OED* "batter" def 1), his heart and take unrestrained possession of him. Donne further implores God to "ravish" him and forcefully rape him in the final lines of his moving sonnet. However, unlike Herbert, Donne does not *remove* his heart from his body. By separating the heart and body, Herbert shockingly disrupts material boundaries to attempt to connect the material and immaterial.<sup>57</sup> Herbert dislodges the conventional by having the speaker of his poem remove his heart and offer it to another person. Even after the speaker offers his heart, he remains alive, for the removal of his central organ actually generates his renewal; the discontinuity does not kill him, but paradoxically makes him "tender, quick, new" (70). This is similar to a divine economy that opposes a worldly system of exchange: "Whoever will save his life shall lose it, whoever loses his life will save it" (Luke 9:24). Whoever sacrificially offers their heart to God will be

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<sup>57</sup> Georges Bataille alludes to this disruption of boundaries when he writes, "Eroticism always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals. But in eroticism less even than in reproduction our discontinuous existence is not condemned, in spite of de Sade; it is only jolted. It has to be jarred and shaken to its foundations. Continuity is what we are after, but generally only if that continuity which the death of discontinuous beings can alone establish is not the victor in the long run. What we desire is to bring into a world founded on discontinuity all the continuity such a world can sustain" (*Eroticism*. London; New York: Boyars, 1987. 18-19).

like Christ and will live; whoever privately offers hand-written verse will present an appropriate offering to his Maker.

After the heart is seized, the speaker explains that it “was dipped and dy’d, / And washed, and wrung” (16-17). This process is clearly linked to David’s pleas to God in Psalm 51:

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . .  
Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
And renew a right spirit within me. . . .  
For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:  
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
A broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 51: 7, 10, 16-17)

David asks for his heart to be purged, washed, and renewed—ultimately to be made clean. Even in the Old Testament, before Christ’s soteriological death on the cross, David understands that God does not desire burnt material offerings: God desires broken hearts. The speaker in “Love Unknown” knows less than David. He does not know enough to offer a broken heart, and he does not even know to ask for the cleansing of his heart. Actually, the speaker, unlike David, appears quite startled by the master’s initial rejection and the servant’s treatment of his heart. Furthermore, he is traumatized when he is forced to watch the cleansing of his now-removed central organ. He “well remembers all / And has good cause” because he witnesses an excruciatingly physical molesting of his heart (15-16).

After Christ seizes the disembodied heart, he throws it into a font “wherein did fall / A stream of blood, which issued from the side / Of a great rock” (13-15). A place of baptism, this font marks the first step in the heart’s purification. The “stream of blood” points to Christ’s sacrificial blood that pours from his side during the crucifixion and replaces the Old Testament animal blood sacrifices. Herbert chooses in this poem, unlike his later poem “The Bag,” to

describe the blood as gushing from the side of a rock and not as flowing from the side of Christ's body. Herbert not only combines the Old Testament story of the rock in the wilderness providing water for the Israelites with the crucifixion, he also links the image of a rock with Christ.<sup>58</sup> This jolting combination, although used throughout the Bible, both separates the material and immaterial realms and also brings them together. Herbert is both moving towards monistic beliefs and pushing against them because, although he wants to believe in monism, he cannot comprehend how the divine realm of God and eternity can be understood in this earthly sphere trapped in space and time. Herbert yearns for unfallen materiality even though he believes it is not possible in the postlapsarian earth. Unlike Milton, Herbert cannot come to terms with monism, yet so many of his poems passionately show his desire to meld the physical and immaterial worlds.

After the speaker's heart is thrown into the baptismal font, it is "dipped" in blood and vivified, much like the process of vivification Harvey describes in "*The Circulation of the Blood*" and discussed earlier in chapter two (16). This act of dipping signifies his heart being penetrated with Christ's pure and sacrificial blood, but "dipped" here can also refer to both the poet's pen dipping into an ink well and God's immaterial pen dipped with "the Spirit of the living God" that writes on the "fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3). These figures of textuality—copying, ink, hand—reflect back to the textual images in "Jordan II" as well as other poems in *The Temple*. Herbert interconnects the spiritual and earthly worlds through the medium of handwriting. He emphasizes that God writes on hearts to ground his spiritual beliefs in the material world. The act of writing is thus conceived of as both a spiritual and an earthly act. For Herbert, not only does alternating between the heart as a physical and immaterial object

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<sup>58</sup>Numbers 20:10-11 details the story of the rock in the wilderness providing water for the Israelites. 1 Corinthians 10:4 explains how believers drink of the spiritual rock. The Gospels also say that when Christ's side is pierced on the cross, blood and water came forth.

connect the divine and mortal worlds, but the act of writing itself helps bridge the gap. Later in “Love Unknown,” Herbert explains that after the heart is dipped, it is “dy’d” (16). The speaker’s heart is “impregnated with a new color” (*OED* “dyed” def 1b), most likely transformed from red to white as suggested by the prophet Isaiah: “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Dyeing is not a superficial treatment but a process that penetrates and changes every layer of the object. It is a physical process that can be connected to a spiritual transformation of the heart, for the dyeing process affects the interior core rather than just the exterior. Moreover, when the speaker’s heart is “dy’d,” Herbert puns on the word “died.” “Dy’d” here alludes to both the death of the speaker’s sinful heart as well as the sacrificial death of Christ. Again, Herbert blurs the boundary between that which is only physical—dyeing a substance—and that which is both physical and spiritual—Christ’s sacrificial death that transforms hearts. This also acts as another example of the heavenly economy of Luke 9:24: “Whoever will save his life shall lose it, whoever loses his life will save it” and a contradiction to the book trade’s fiscal economy.

Once the speaker’s heart is “dy’d,” his heart is washed, signifying that it is cleansed from all impurities. This washing is connected with the baptismal font mentioned in the previous lines and the belief that Christ is the source of living water: “the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).<sup>59</sup> Washing also suggests “a separating of heavier objects from lighter objects,” which points to the separation of earthly sin from spiritual purity (*OED* “washed” def 1b). Finally, the heart is “wrung” (17). It is squeezed, twisted, and pressed, much like the act of pressing grapes described in the poem “The Bunch of Grapes” that immediately precedes “Love Unknown.” The final line of “The Bunch of Grapes”

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<sup>59</sup> John 7:37 also describes Christ as the “Living Water.” Isaiah 44:3 states, “I will pour water on him who is thirsty.” This is also like David in Psalm 63:1, whose thirst for God is connected with the need for liquid nourishment in order to convey the depth of his desire for relationship with God.

explains that God himself “was pressed for [the speaker’s] sake” (28). “Pressed” here also reminds the reader of the burgeoning use of printing presses in the seventeenth century, but in this case, Herbert reminds the reader that it is Christ’s single sacrificial pressing that is important, not the monotonous act of mechanically pressing paper. Christ alone was “wrung” on the cross for man’s sins, which produced pure, sacrificial blood. In “Love Unknown,” however, Christ’s heart is not pressed, but rather the narrator’s heart, which dramatizes an important transference from Christ’s suffering to man’s cleansing. The narrator in “Love Unknown” has learned to internalize Christ’s suffering: the boundary between Savior and saved is even more tenuous here. The two figures interpenetrate rather than exist independently. For Herbert, the heart defines the place where the material and spiritual touch, with its significance figured later in the poem when the speaker assumes the grief-stricken voice of Christ. The speaker, after he recalls the violence visited upon his heart, testifies that just remembering “the very wringing/ Enforceth tears” (17-18). This picture of suffering harkens back to Christ’s acute suffering described in the “Sacrifice.” For the speaker of “Love Unknown,” like Christ in earlier poems, the retelling of the story creates fresh tears. The use of “enforceth” here reminds us of the violence and pain that accompanies this cleaning process, and reminds the reader of Christ’s ultimate suffering and sacrifice. The speaker, as well as his disembodied heart, must be afflicted physically to be transformed spiritually and ultimately brought to communion with Christ.

After Christ informs the speaker that his “*heart was foul I fear*” (18), the speaker begins the confession process:

Indeed ‘tis true. I did and do commit  
Many a fault more than my lease will bear;  
Yet still asked pardon, and was not denied.  
But you shall hear. . . . (19-22)

The speaker explains he “did and do[es] commit” many sins. This awkward past and present structure echoes back to the speaker’s initial introduction that he “had / And [has]” a Lord. The speaker not only sinned in the past but also inhabits the present, fallen world. Even though his sin continually reappears and creates a gap between him and his master, his existence will be made continuous through the servant. As the narrative continues, the speaker explains that when he “saw a large / And spacious furnace flaming,” he immediately rushed to “fetch a sacrifice out of the fold” (30). The speaker, while now attempting to offer Abel’s genuine sacrifice of “the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof,” instead of Cain’s false sacrifice, fails to realize the necessity of offering himself and is astonished by the swift removal of his heart from his body (Genesis 4: 4). Startlingly, he explains that “the man / Who was to take it from me, slipped his hand, / And threw my heart into the scalding pan” (33-5). The man “slipped” the speaker’s heart out of his body. “Slipped” here can mean “to pass through or to glide or pass easily from one place to another” (*OED* “slip” def 10). But how can one’s heart pass easily out of the body? Herbert uses this verb to problematize the boundaries of his physically based story and its spiritual lesson. While the removal of his organ seems effortless, the throwing of his heart into a “scalding pan” is acutely violent. Herbert accentuates the pain and violence by eliding the heart’s disembodiment. However, the speaker underscores his shock when he explains that it was his heart that was thrown into the pan: “My heart, that brought it (do you understand?) / The offerers heart” (36-7). Herbert’s question here, strikingly set off in parenthesis, engages his readers to ensure they understand the importance of his tale: it is “The offerers heart” and its ultimate transformation that concerns both Herbert and Christ (37). The heart, not even the story or the poem, is most important.

While his heart is bathed with blood in the scalding pan, the speaker explains that “A friend did steal into my cup for good, / Ev’n taken inwardly, and most divine / To supple hardness” (43-5). Because the speaker is responsive to the bathing of his heart, the “bare wine” that fills the cups of others is not bare for him (42). His cup is startlingly filled with “a friend” who he is able to “take inwardly” and who noticeably softens his heart (43). Critics such as Elizabeth Clarke and Robert Whalen show how these lines reveal Herbert’s belief in transubstantiation.<sup>60</sup> I find it compelling that Herbert incorporates this complex theological belief in such simple terms, using transubstantiation to show the plasticity of the boundary between the physical and immaterial world. This boundary represents a problem for Herbert, who must employ transubstantiation to create the liminal space for God to do His work. By stating that a friend entered his cup, Herbert merges the simple act of drinking with the transference of immaterial life. The boundary between the material and immaterial once again is disrupted, which, for Herbert, leads back to continuity and the heavenly system of exchange where a person gains his life when he chooses to lose it.

While the speaker continues to struggle with his thoughts and repeatedly leaves his heart behind, he eventually realizes he must empty himself and acknowledge that “all my scores were by another paid, / Who took the debt upon him” (60-1). These unusually clear and definite final lines of the speaker lead directly to the most critical point of the poem, when man is emptied of himself and Christ takes over to complete the story:

. . . *Truly, Friend,*  
*For ought I hear, our Master shows to you*  
*More favour than you wot of. Mark the end.*  
*The Font did only, what was old, renew:*  
*The Caldron suppld, what was grown too hard:*

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<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Clarke. *Theory and Theology in George Herbert’s Poetry*: “Divinitie, and Poesie, Met.” Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Robert Whalen. *Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.



*The Thorns did quicken, what was grown too dull:  
All did but strive to mend, what you had marred.  
Wherefore be cheered, and praise him to the full  
Each day, each hour, each moment of the week,  
Who fain would have you be, new, tender, quick. (61-70)*

Christ completes the speaker's narrative by explaining that God shows "More favour than you wot of": God gives more love than man can "know or understand" (*OED* "wit" def b1). Christ describes God's love as unknowable in material terms, and therefore, impossible to "copie out" into poetry; however, the textual variant in line 62 of "your Master" and "our Master" also reveals that, with Christ's help, divine love can be realized in mortal language. By changing "your Master" to "our Master," a change Herbert makes in later handwritten copies of his poem, the gap between man, Christ, and God narrows. The master is not just Christ's father but also the speaker's father. The speaker is now welcomed into God's family, and by the end of "Love Unknown," the speaker and Christ are "Truly" friends who share the same master because their hearts have the same inscription of divine love (61).

Even though the narrator initially explains that the story will be "long and sad," the "Dear Friend" repeatedly interjects the true moral of the story (1). In the final lines, Christ interprets this materially-based story as a hopeful and spiritually regenerative lesson. The narrator, and in turn the reader, realizes he needs the friend to listen to him, interpret the meaning of his story, and then take over the verse. This mentorship teaches the speaker how to, as he explains in the first stanza of *The Temple*, "turn delight into sacrifice" ("Perirrhanterium" 6). Herbert learns how to give over his material heart as a spiritual offering. Additionally, the speaker's parenthetical groans woven throughout the poem, "I sigh to say" (8), "I sigh to tell" (24), "I sigh to speak" (50), tie the narrative together while also looking ahead to the powerful final lines of "A True Hymn":

Whereas if th' heart be moved,  
Although the verse be somewhat scant,  
God doth supply the want.  
As when th' heart says (sighing to be approved)  
*O, could I love!* And stops: God writeth, *Loved*. (16-20)

In "Jordan II" the speaker learns what he is supposed to do: "*copie out onely*" the inscription in his heart, but in "Love Unknown," both the speaker and the reader learn how to accept Christ's "expense" and allow God to "writeth, *Loved*" ("True Hymn" 20). Only by alternating between looking *in* the heart and then *removing* the heart as a sacrifice can Herbert's reader find the "sweetly readie penn'd" inscription, "*Loved*," that is not mechanically reproduced by a printing press, but with God's intimate love on the reader's heart (18). The intimate physical act of God writing on a believer's heart takes place because God offers his son's bloody, sacrificial hands and body.

Due to his dualistic beliefs, Herbert cannot meld the physical and spiritual worlds he longs to connect. He envisions God's Spirit guiding his pen rather than believing his poetry is imbued with life and God's vital warmth. The cold, stone-based printing press lacks life and is further removed from God's Spirit, which he believes must guide his hand. As a country parson, Herbert values the direct interaction of God working in his heart and his ability to personally interact with not only paper and ink, but his parishioners. The intimate act of laboring over, writing and preaching verse generates authenticity and a true offering of first fruits. Milton, lacking the outlet of verbally preaching to believers, makes the jump to monism and the print industry that Herbert chooses to avoid during his life. However, by writing to Nicholas Ferrar and initiating the opportunity for his works to be printed after his death, Herbert allows for the elision of boundaries between the physical and spiritual worlds: through his death, Herbert

overcomes the boundary between earth and heaven, which manifests itself in the printing of *The Temple*.

### MILTON'S CONCEPTION OF THE HEART

Like many poets before him, John Milton envisions the heart as a physical text in many of his works. Even in his first published poem, "On Shakespeare," printed anonymously in William Shakespeare's *Second Folio* (1632), Milton regards his reader's heart as a text. Moreover, Milton is not focused on the monument of a physical book in this poem as much as he is on the lasting impression the work has on the reader's heart. I will examine Milton's poem "On Shakespeare" and his conception of what constitutes a lasting monument further in chapter five; however, for my purposes here, I want to focus on how Milton conceives of the heart as a text written upon by God, and not a mass-produced text to be sold for profit or fame.

In his first published poem, Milton engages the reader to wrestle with the actual text of his poem. By navigating the shifting pronouns throughout the poem, the reader finally realizes Milton's central claim that printed poems and man-made monuments are not as lasting as the impressions those poems and monuments make in fleshy hearts. The poem begins by asking, "What needs my Shakespeare for *his* honour'd Bones," objectifying Shakespeare through the use of third-person pronouns (1). In lines 6-13, Milton shifts to addressing Shakespeare directly: "What need'st *thou* such weak witness of *thy* name?" (6); "*Thou* in our wonder and astonishment" (7); "Hast built *thy self* a live-long Monument" (8); and "Then *thou* our fancy" (13).<sup>61</sup> In the last four lines, Milton changes his focus again, but this time he points to "us," the plural reader, when he writes about "*our* fancy" and "make *us* Marble" (14). While the reader

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<sup>61</sup> J. Martin Evans in "The Birth of the Author" briefly comments on the first two sets of pronouns used in the sonnet stating, "the anonymous voice is now directed to two quite different audiences, first to the reader, then to the poet's subject" (52). However, Evans does not address the use of "our" and "us" in the final four lines.

negotiates the shifting pronouns of the poem, he learns that Milton's final emphasis is not Shakespeare or even his works, but the lasting and real imprint made on readers' hearts. The heart, not the poem or the book itself, is the lasting text.

Just as Augustine often builds on the words of the Apostle Paul in his *Confessions*, Milton alludes to Paul's letter to Corinth, and likely Augustine's autobiography discussed in chapter one, when he explains in "On Shakespeare" that he wants his readers to internalize his verse. Milton yearns for an internalization of written text, just as Paul wants Christ's followers to internalize their salvation:

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

Paul urges the Corinthians not to see their conversion as something written on "tables of stone," but instead as a lasting impression written "in fleshy tables of the heart," much like Milton's movement in his poem from "piled stones" to "each heart" (2,10). The reader, not the poet or the verse, is "the letter" spoken of by Paul and the central focus of Milton's verse. In the seventeenth century, printed books were more like the tables of stone referenced by Milton than fleshy hearts, for mass-produced books were not thought to be intimately created by the author. Printing presses used stone "beds" that held the small metal letters in place while printing (Moran 22). The term "stone" implied mechanization as well as a cold, inhuman surface, as opposed to a fleshy, malleable heart the prophets of Scripture prefer. Like Paul's letter, the writings of Ezekiel similarly describe the spiritual transformation of believers: "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). This internal, impressionable heart—

not stone tablets or reams of paper run through stone-bed printing presses—constitutes the ideal text on which God ultimately writes.

According to the *OED*, the word *stone* in the seventeenth century could refer to “a type of hardness, and hence as an emblem of insensibility, stupidity, deadness or the like; esp. in phrases of comparison with various adjs. as *blind, cold, dead, deaf, dumb, hard, etc.*” Stone was also used “in a figurative sense, chiefly as the supposed substance of a ‘hard’ heart” (*OED*). Many poets, particularly Shakespeare, drew upon these definitions: In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Launce describes his father as “a stone, a very pibble stone, [who] has no more pitty in him then a dogge” (2.3.11); in *Henry V*, the hostess repeatedly laments, “All was cold as any stone” (2.3.26); in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Lafeu speaks of “A medicine . . . able to breathe life into a stone” (2.1.76). While Shakespeare, as well as other poets,<sup>62</sup> uses the word stone to emphasize physical coldness and insensibility, Milton employs the word to emphasize a spiritual hardness. Even though Milton repeatedly refers to physical blindness in his poetry, he does not use the conventional meaning of the word stone to address physical deficiencies; he remains focused on spiritual “stoniness.” When Michael shows Adam “all maladies / Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms / Of heart-sick agony,” Milton illuminates Adam's moral heart-sickness (11.482-83). The narrator then adds, “Sight so deform what heart of rock could long / Dry-eyed behold? Adam could not, but wept” (11.494-95). Adam weeps when confronted with such agony. His heart is now vulnerable and malleable because of his spiritual convictions.

Milton also draws upon the image of piled stones to symbolize Old Testament altars, in “On Shakespeare” as well as *Paradise Lost*: “pile up every stone / Of lustre from the brook, in

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<sup>62</sup> Additional contemporary literary references to stone and stonie hearts: 1598 R. Bernard, *Terence, Heautontim.* 5.1, “Signes . . . whereby I might haue perceiued it, had not I beene a very stone [*ni essem lapis*].” 1612 *Two Noble K.* 1.1.140 “Your sorrow beates so ardently upon me, That it shall make a counter reflect gainst My Brothers heart, and warme it to some pitty, Though it were made of stone.” a1659 T. PESTEL *Psalm for Christmas Day Morning*, “Joyn then all hearts that are not stone . . . To celebrate this holy One” (*OED*).

memory” (11.324-5). In addition to being used in reference to a printing press, the term was also used in the seventeenth century as an emblem of a gravestone, signifying physical death and lifeless material. Milton includes the use of a stone in his description of Cain killing Abel, a detail not found in the biblical account: Cain “Smote him into the Midriff with a stone / That beat out life; he fell, and deadly pale / Groand out his Soul” (11.445-48). Not only does Milton accentuate Cain’s murder weapon, he emphasizes how Abel fell “deadly pale,” a characteristic of being “astonied” as well as a characteristic we have learned from Harvey that points to the loss of blood and vitality in the body. Milton did not limit himself to the secular and physical connotations of stone, but added a spiritual dimension to the accepted meanings, using, like the Holy Scriptures, material objects to point to spiritual instruction.

By redefining what constitutes a lasting monument, Milton did not confine himself to teaching temporal lessons. He realized that when words were written directly on hearts they could avoid the temporality of language. If your purpose is Cain’s purpose—an outward show that lacks meaning—then the sacrifice is only a vain commodity. If your purpose is Abel’s purpose—a heartfelt sacrifice honoring and praising God—then the sacrifice is a true spiritual sacrifice God accepts. Milton understands that poems written from the heart, like Abel’s sacrifice, matter most to God. The outward show, or even the mass production of a work, will not impress God or man’s heart. Nonetheless, Milton did choose to have his works mass-produced with the aid of the printing press because he realized he could use the efficient production method as a vehicle to distribute his works that would in turn prompt readers to accept God’s Spirit who writes in hearts. In *City of God*, Augustine writes that “God speaks with a man not by means of some bodily creature making sound in bodily ears . . . Rather he speaks by the truth itself” (9.2). Milton believed that God is not limited to material communication; he

can transcend written and auditory language not just by communicating with man's mind but by directly leaving an impression on hearts. Milton explains in *Christian Doctrine*: "Moses imposed the letter, or external law . . . whereas Christ writes the inward of God by his spirit on the hearts of believers, and leads them as willing followers" (1012). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton similarly describes that God "will place within them as a guide /My Umpire Conscience" (3.194-95). God's conscience will then live within regenerate hearts and directly guide each soul, avoiding the materiality and temporality of language:

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood  
Praying, for from the Mercie-seat above  
Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd  
The stonie from thir hearts, & made new flesh  
Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breath'd  
Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer  
Inspir'd, and wing'd for Heav'n with speedier flight  
Then loudest Oratorie: (11.1-8)

Grace removed the "stonie" from their hearts, causing soft, new, impressionable flesh to grow in its place. This transformation caused sounds "unutterable," which moved to heaven faster than the "loudest Oratorie." The metamorphosis from stone to flesh is a divine act that allows the receiver to communicate with God in a non-auditory way. Milton's main goal is this transformation of hearts, not mass-producing physical texts. Paul explains in Romans 8:26 that "the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Words are surpassed by spiritual groans that can triumph over physical distance, for, Milton explains, even the loudest formal speech cannot fly to heaven more quickly than the sighs from a regenerate heart. These sighs, nevertheless, are rooted in the fundamental inscription in man's heart. They are the inaudible sounds generated from the lasting impression inscribed within the heart and not lifeless sounds generated from printed words.

In the next seven lines, Milton emphasizes the importance of Adam and Eve's heart-centered petitions, comparing their regeneration to Deucalion's and Pyrrha's pleas to repopulate the earth. But this comparison works on multiple levels, for not only are both couples directly pleading to divine power for continued life, but both stories are centered on the transformation of stones (or "stonie" hearts) to flesh:

. . . yet thir port  
Not of mean suiters, nor important less  
Seem'd thir Petition, then when th' ancient Pair  
In Fables old, less ancient yet then these,  
Deucalion and chaste Pyrrha to restore  
The Race of Mankind drownd, before the Shrine  
Of Themis stood devout. (*PL* 11.8-14)

Deucalion and Pyrrha, after surviving the great flood, cast stones to earth that are transformed into humans. The rocks lose their hardness, turn to flesh, and restore the race of mankind. Adam and Eve's softened hearts similarly restore mankind, not only by propagating the race but also by accepting Grace and allowing God to transform their hearts eternally.

Milton elaborates upon the difference between dormant stone and impressionable flesh immediately after Adam and Eve fall: their bodies become mortal, and as we saw in chapter three, Adam's heart hardens and Eve's body initially becomes feverish and sick and ultimately thick and "gross" (6.661). Adam is "amazed, / Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill / Ran through his veins / . . . Speechless he stood and pale" (9.889-91, 894), much like Ezra who is spiritually distraught when his tribe disobeys God: "I rent my garment and my mantle and sat down astonied" (Ezra 9:3). The *OED* defines *astonied*, a form of the word *stone*, as "Deprived for the moment of the power of action, dazed, paralysed." Adam is struck motionless and has no choice but to remain still. Because of his sin, his "astonied" posture is not a sign of obedience (like Christ in *Paradise Regained*, who chooses to stand motionless upon the pinnacle), but



rather the effect of his disobedience. Milton here emphasizes that Adam's material body changes due to his internal choice. His once fleshy, God-centered heart is transformed to a fallen, thick "stonie" heart. William Kerrigan similarly observes the material change in Adam and Eve:

*Paradise Lost* presents the Fall not only in its moral valeness—of obedience, temptation, and will—but also in terms of the physical mechanisms that constitute the shift from a state of grace to the state of fallenness. . . . The very substance of Adam and Eve thickens as an organic consequence of their actions, leaving them 'gross' for paradise, and they are ejected from Eden in an emetic as much as a judicial sense. (107)

In the words of Harvey, Adam and Eve lose some of their "vital principle" and "pulsific force" when they fall, but Milton still illuminates their intertwined physical and spiritual nature and shows that God can restore their physical state through grace. Adam and Eve change from "Spirits of purest light, Purest at first, [to] now gross by sinning grown" (6.661). Their once spiritual, refined bodies are now temporal and gross.<sup>63</sup> Adam and Eve are burdened with sin and thick like stone; nevertheless, their hearts are later softened by God and the impression written on their hearts is eternized. After the Fall, God declares that he "will cleer thir senses dark, / What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts / To pray, repent, and bring obedience due" (3.188-90). This transformation, depending on the person's obedience or disobedience, can soften or harden one's heart, for it works both ways. Furthermore, just as man's being can change, so can the vitality of books.

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<sup>63</sup> Henry Power in *Experimental philosophy* (1664) also refers to gross in a similar way: "Those grosser, and far more material, Effluvioms, from Electrical and Aromatical Bodies" (3.155). John Dryden in *Cinyras and Myrrha* (1700): "They gave you love to lighten up your mind, And purge the grosser parts" (449). It is also interesting to note that gross was used in the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries as "letters printed or written" (*OED* 1c). Perhaps this could be linked with temporal language being less superior when compared to direct communication with God.

When Adam and Eve leave the garden, they realize their fallen state and see their physical nakedness. However, their spiritual nakedness is more humiliating: they have an “inward nakedness, much more opprobrious” (*PL* 10.221). Their fallen hearts, now hard like stone, disgrace them more than their uncovered physical bodies because their internal state is more significant than their outward state. Nevertheless, even though they are now more distant from their creator, God does not abandon them in their material and spiritual thickness. God “behold[s] them softened, and with tears / Bewailing their excess” (*PL* 11.110-11). Here, *behold* can mean both “to hold onto” and “to consider,” revealing that God remains concerned with his creation but also sees them fallen and burdened with “excess” sin. They are no longer refined and purified creatures; they have a polluted “excess” that is a physical and spiritual burden (much like John Bunyan’s Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, who carries his sin as a burden on his back). Adam acutely understands this separation: before the Fall, Adam uses stones in a positive way to build altars to honor God. After the Fall, he laments his fallen state and this loss of intimacy:

Here I could frequent  
With worship place by place where he vouchsafed  
Presence Divine; and to my sons relate,  
On this mount he appeared; under this tree  
Stood visible; among these pines his voice  
I heard; here with him at this fountain talked:  
So many grateful altars I would rear  
Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone  
Of lustre from the brook, in memory,  
Or monument to ages; (11.317-26)

In the Garden of Eden, stones were a natural element of the earth that Adam reverentially used to glorify God. But once Adam falls and his heart is hardened, he asks, “In yonder nether world where shall I seek / His bright appearances, or foot-step trace?” (11.328-29). Adam questions where he shall commune with God outside of Eden, knowing that his refined spirit has been

corrupted. Through Michael, God consoles Adam and Eve, explaining that each of them “but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee” (12.586-87). If they accept God’s grace, outside of Eden they will have a paradise within them of softened hearts where the Holy Spirit can reside within their nonetheless fallen bodies. The stone monuments they once built in Eden are replaced with their material bodies that are softened by God and transformed into living temples: “Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them” (2 Corinthians 6:16). The physical stone temples are now superseded by their refashioned living hearts, just as the text of mass-produced books is superseded by the text written by the Spirit of God on fleshy hearts.

Just as Milton believes words can inspire and transform readers in “On Shakespeare,” in *Paradise Lost*, he views matter (human bodies as well as books) as a “seedbed” that can be infused with life. In *Christian Doctrine* Milton explains:

Matter is not an evil thing, nor should it be thought worthless, but is good and is a seedbed for the subsequent production of every good thing. It was a substance—to be derived from no other source than the fountain of all substance—disordered at first and formless, which God thereafter arranged and made lovely. (6.308)

God’s spirit, or seed, must infuse matter (material body/stony hearts/books) to transform it to a higher, spiritual degree. D. Bentley Hart warns that “One should not overlook how thoroughly for Milton the material realm is implicated in the divine life, nor should one ignore his apparent conviction that the created cosmos is a ramification of the divine presence” (21). God uses matter for his divine purpose, just as Milton believes his printed poetry can lead men to spiritual regeneration.

While his poetry is ultimately transcribed into written words, Milton claims that his words are divinely inspired. The invocation of *Paradise Lost* explains Milton’s desire for the Holy Spirit to inspire his poetry: “Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer / Before all Temples th’ upright

heart and pure, / Instruct me, for Thou know'st" (PL 1.17-19). In *Paradise Regained* Milton similarly pleads: "Thou Spirit . . . inspire / As thou art wont, my prompted song else mute" (1.8, 11-12). His poetry's power does not come directly from the words themselves or even from Milton; it flows from the source of his inspiration, the Holy Spirit. Even though *Areopagitica* attests that books have a "potency of life," the temporal words should not be revered. The physical object of the book, a result of a mechanical process, can be alive; however, the book provides not the source of the divine wisdom but rather the vehicle. Christ tells Satan in *Paradise Regained* not to be

Deep-versed in books and shallow in [yourself],  
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys  
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge,  
As children gathering pebbles on the shore. (*PR* 4.327-30)

Man can be "deep versed" yet "shallow," only collecting words as toys like children collecting stones on the shore. Yet men can also write inspired verse and prose as long as their heart imitates Abel's in its focus on God. Milton warns against men collecting external, vain things ("trifles") instead of internalizing and using worthy, deep and valuable things ("choice matters"). Even while writing during the expansion of the printing industry in seventeenth-century England, Milton understands that books are fleeting and can often be useless, misused, or even destructive. Books themselves are temporary vehicles akin to earthly glory that is "but the blaze of flame . . . / The people's praise . . . / To live upon thir tongues and be thir talk" (3.47-48, 54-55). Milton values divinely inspired, heart-centered inspiration and transformation, not just material language that temporarily animates mortal tongues.

Milton explains that God's Spirit is poured on his Apostles and all who are baptized: who "At length / Their ministry performed, and race well run, / Their doctrine and their story written left, / They die" (12.504-507). After their death, their written story, inscribed by God and

inspired by the Spirit, lives on. The power is “Left only in those written records pure,” but the words of the story do not retain the power on their own, for they are “not but by the Spirit understood” (12.513-14). The Spirit’s activity through the story gives it life, not the words or medium of print. Nevertheless, the inscription in the heart must be present for the Spirit to then interpret the meaning of the text. Immediately following these lines, Michael warns how men will

Seek to avail themselves of names,  
Places, and titles, and with these to join  
Secular power; though feigning still to act  
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating  
The Spirit of God, promised alike and given  
To all believers; and, from that pretence,  
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force  
On every conscience; laws which none shall find  
Left them inrolled, or what the Spirit within  
Shall on the heart engrave. (12.515-24)

Men will pretend to be inspired by the Spirit, incorrectly appropriating spiritual power to secular things. However, these laws will not last, for they are not rooted in the pure inscription in the heart. To have lasting strength, the laws must be engraved on the heart itself and internalized by its citizens. In *Areopagitica*, Milton describes that “Impunity and remissness, for certain, are the bane of a commonwealth; but here the great art lies, to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work” (749-752). An inward acceptance and transformation must take place in order for words and laws to take root in an individual heart and persist through time.

When used incorrectly, written words, including the Holy Scriptures, can be useless and even destructive. Satan tempts Christ, claiming “it is written,” but because Satan is interpreting Scripture apart from the Spirit of God, his words themselves are dormant (PR 4.556). Christ uses the Scriptures to conform to the character of God; Satan uses the Scriptures to break, mar,

and reject the image, the imprint, the likeness of God. The words themselves are not the source of power; when filled with the Spirit of God and used according to God's divine purpose, then they are sacred. Christ's description of Rome similarly minimizes material splendor:

Though thou should'st add to tell  
Their sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts  
On citron tables or Atlantic stone  
(For I have also heard, perhaps have read),  
Their wines of Setia, Cales, and Falerne,  
Chios and Crete, and how they quaff in gold,  
Crystal, and myrrhine cups, imbossed with gems  
And studs of pearl--to me should'st tell, who thirst  
And hunger still. (4.113-21)

The Romans, although they gluttonously eat from lavishly filled stone tables, are not nourished; Christ physically “thirst(s) / and hunger(s) still” due to his fasting in the desert, but the gluttonous Romans spiritually “thirst / and hunger still” (4.120-1). In this passage Christ de-emphasizes words when, in parenthesis, he states that he has “heard, perhaps have read” of adorned cups filled with exotic wines, which hold no spiritual value. Power comes from the source of the divine words and, according to the New Testament, the blood of Christ, not from the words themselves, extravagantly filled stone tables, jeweled cups, or earthly wines:

Who, therefore, seeks in these [mortal things]  
True wisdom finds her not, or, by delusion  
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,  
An empty cloud. (*PR* 4.318-21)

Material objects, including words and printed books, are empty in and of themselves. Just as Christ explains that mortal things are empty clouds, Solomon laments that “I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Milton similarly condemns the arch-angels' erection of Pandemonium, calling the mining of metals “the precious bane”:

[They] Ransack'd the Center, and with impious hands  
Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth  
For Treasures better hid. Soon had his crew  
Op'nd into the Hill a spacious wound  
And dig'd out ribs of Gold. Let none admire  
That riches grow in Hell; that soyle may best  
Deserve the pretious bane. (1.686-92)

When natural elements such as stone and gold are used to erect material structures, the materials themselves are worthless. The internal motive supersedes all external actions and material products. If man had created the Tower of Babel to glorify God instead of trying to equal Him, God would not have thwarted man's efforts. Nevertheless, Milton explains that material things (words, matter, books, stony hearts) can be used and transformed by God to leave an enduring impression, much like a piece of coal, with the correct force working upon it, can be transformed into a diamond and used to honor God.

Milton insists that the Holy Spirit, dwelling within Adam and Eve, directly writes upon their hearts and can protect them from harm. Words, distance, and temptation are usurped by the lasting impression directly written in their core:

. . . from Heav'n  
Hee to his own a Comforter will send,  
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
His Spirit within them, and the Law of Faith  
Working through love, upon thir hearts shall write,  
To guide them in all truth, and also arm  
With spiritual armour. (12.485-91)

The Holy Spirit writes on their hearts and dwells within them, protecting them with the power of spiritual armor. This spiritual armor gives them “inward consolations” and “shall amaze / thir proudest persecutors” (12.495-97). Unlike Adam and Eve’s protection dwelling within them, the arch-angels have a weak, material armor that only provides superficial protection. Satan’s army is described as having “rigid Spears, and Helmets throng'd, and Shields / Various, with boastful

Argument (inscription) portraid” (4.83-84). This reference to engraved inscription on the arch-angels’ armor can be compared to the inscription on stone monuments in “On Shakespeare,” as well as the ineffectual carnal laws in *Areopagitica* and spiritless words printed in books.

Outward material markings are short-lived and impotent. Later, Milton describes the arch-angels’ defeat, referring again to their material armor:

Thir armor help'd thir harm, crush't in and bruis'd  
Into thir substance pent, which wrought them pain  
Implacable, and many a dolorous groan,  
Long struggling underneath, ere they could wind  
Out of such prison. (6.656-60)

An outward mark is again negative, and the armor (which has the material inscription) is crushed into the devils, harming “thir substance” even more. The inscription is not written on their hearts, but on their armor, much like the Greek’s powerless “swelling epithetes, thick-laid / As varnish on a harlot's cheek” (*PR* 4.343-44). Internal imprints on fleshy hearts, not superficial markings or mass-produced books, are lasting, positive, and protective. Adam and Eve’s guidance and protection are perpetuated by the words in their hearts, much like Augustine’s hope that comes from the words that are “Stricken” upon his heart (X, vi, vol. 2, 87).

Not only does Milton describe the heart as a text in his poetry, Milton also conceives of the heart as a book in the prose tract *Areopagitica*. Milton concerns himself with more than the controversial licensing of physical books in this tract. The main argument in *Areopagitica* can be better understood if we consider that the books Milton refers to in *Areopagitica* are not only physical books, but also books of the heart that have been inscribed with God’s Spirit. Milton advocates a type of freedom of press in this powerful prose tract, but in addition he alludes to what he believes to be the most powerful and life-giving books—human hearts that have a “life beyond life” (*Areopagitica* 492)?



While Milton believes that a “a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life,” he does not believe that the words alone are a lasting monument to be revered (*Areopagitica* 578). The words, when inscribed by God, can be a vehicle of God’s divine power: “For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them” (578). A book can have a profound impact on many lives. However, the spiritual imprint made when the source of the words is internalized in fleshy hearts makes a lasting impression that outlives the poet and the book. Milton navigates the growing print industry in seventeenth-century England by using his printed works to promote the intimate sphere of the heart as the most lasting text.

While Herbert believed the process of mass producing his works during his lifetime disrupted his work’s authenticity and created an unwanted distance between himself and his readers, the monistic Milton overcame any fears of mass production and used mechanically produced books as vehicles for his heavenly inspired verse. Even though Milton shunned idolatry and ornate pageantry throughout his life, he concluded that books themselves are not to be rejected because they possess the ability to carry the spirit and intention of the author to readers, which in turn can transform hearts with the aid of God’s Spirit. Just as Cain and Abel realize through their act of offering gifts to God that it was the intentions of their hearts that mattered most, Milton attests that it is not merely the physical offering of a gift, body, or book, but the heart and intention of the person giving the sacrifice that matters most to God. For Milton, the physical and spiritual is intertwined into one essence; therefore, books themselves are

imbued with spirit and contain a “potency of life” not to be idolized but to be employed for God’s ultimate glory.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PASSION AND THE HEART: "NOTHING SATISFIED"

Milton's "The Passion" has been described as Milton's most unsatisfying and callow poem. Michael Schoenfeldt claims that "the subject of Christ's suffering and death brought out [Milton's] worst" (579). Gordon Teskey claims that Milton was never moved "by the baby in its mother's arms and by the man on the cross because they are images of helplessness, not of power, and their appeal is to the emotions, rather than to the instincts for order and for command" (485- 86). While many critics either cast off Milton's passion poem or, like Barbara Lewalski and J. Martin Evans, describe how Milton's "The Passion" is a companion poem to his "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," my analysis will show how "The Passion" is an innovative and finished poem that should be viewed as a companion poem to Milton's first published poem, "On Shakespeare." Milton's passion poem supersedes the premise introduced in "On Shakespeare" that a fleshy, inscribed heart is the most lasting and critical monument and asserts that a poem on the momentous crucifixion of Christ cannot be completed on paper but must be completed within the poet's and readers' fleshy hearts. Milton did not write "The Passion" as a literary work, but rather a poem to spiritually challenge his readers. By refocusing our mode of interpretation from a literary work to a spiritual poem, it becomes clear that Milton's passion poem ends appropriately: by ending the poem abruptly on paper, Milton challenges his readers to personally continue the poem in their hearts. By contrasting Milton's

“The Passion” with Herbert’s “Good Friday,” I will further show how Milton concludes his poem with silence in order to emphasize that a poem on the crucifixion of Christ, if completed as a physical artifact, could potentially become a false monument. By leaving his poem’s conclusion silent and implied, Milton precludes this danger and further asserts the heart as the most lasting and vital monument. By design, Milton pointedly ends his poem on paper and challenges his readers to allow God’s Spirit to continue the poem in their hearts and create an internal, individualized, life-giving poem of salvation that will exist eternally.

Both “The Passion” and “On Shakespeare” were written in 1630 and foreground the heart as the fleshy core of man that must be written upon.<sup>64</sup> Both poems reject standard beliefs in the power of adamantine monuments by privileging the soft, malleable interior space of the heart. “The Passion” ends with a purposeful silence that moves both the poet and the reader to look in their heart for the Spirit’s lasting engraving. Similar to Herbert’s “Good Friday” poem, “The Passion” reveals Milton’s belief that the heart must remain the core of man even while seventeenth-century culture, including transformations in understandings of anatomy, philosophy, economics, and theology, is pointing in new directions. Milton’s “The Passion” ends in the middle of what one would expect to be a longer poem in order to forcefully illustrate that a true passion poem cannot be a physical idol but must be completed inside each reader’s transformed heart.

Herbert and Milton both struggle with how to translate God’s inscription in their hearts in their own language bound poetry. Both poets grapple with how to translate the Spirit’s internal engravings; however, Milton ultimately realizes that his written poems are only limited

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas Warton: “we may conjecture that this Ode was probably composed soon after that on the Nativity. And this perhaps was a college exercise at Easter, as the last was at Christmas” (quoted in *Works of Milton*, ed. Todd (1826) 6:29n.) Many scholars link Milton’s passion poem to the Nativity Ode as well as “On Circumcision,” but I argue that Milton’s passion poem is best understood through its links to Milton’s contemplation of Shakespeare’s memory.

translations of the perfect text written by God in believers' hearts. Herbert concludes in his poem "Good Friday" that God must subsume the poet's identity and become the author of his poems, while Milton insists in "On Shakespeare" that the most powerful poetry leaves an impression written in hearts, not on the page, which serves as a lasting testament to be revered. By completing "Good Friday," Herbert opens the door for his poem to become that which is revered rather than the actual crucifixion of Christ. In "The Passion" Milton establishes that the most spiritually important event, the crucifixion of Christ, cannot be accurately expressed in words but must transcend human language and be written in the heart in order to be an authentic passion poem. Milton's poem illustrates that without Christ's sacrifice, man cannot have a fleshy, inscribed heart. Christ's sacrifice is God's ultimate gift of grace that breaks man's hardened heart and allows the Spirit to enter into man's soul and write. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is what creates the possibility for man's heart to be transformed and written upon, which in turn, creates the most lasting and powerful poetry, not in written language, but inside each believer's heart.

As we have seen in previous chapters, questions concerning the consistency of hearts—whether they are soft, hard, fleshy, stony, clay-like, or adamant—frequent seventeenth-century poetry and are discussed in the works of anatomist William Harvey. Before analyzing how Milton's "The Passion" underscores the need for individuals to maintain a soft, fleshy heart attuned to God's will, we need to look more closely at how the consistency of the heart is discussed in other seventeenth-century works in order to understand how in "The Passion" Milton is both using the motif and transforming it; a poet or reader with a tense, hardened heart cannot complete "The Passion" in his heart, for a stony heart is not malleable and able to be written upon by the Spirit.

Harvey, because of his interest in understanding the mystic force and “vital principal” of the heart, used scientific experiments to survey the actual changing consistency of the heart, which helps us more clearly understand why a hardened heart is not a viable vehicle for completing Milton’s crucifixion poem. In his Lumleian lectures, beginning in 1616, as well as his 1628 treatise, *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus*, Harvey scientifically explains when hearts become harder:

The heart being grasped in the hand is felt to become harder during its action. Now this hardness proceeds from tension, precisely as when the forearm is grasped, its tendons are perceived to become tense and resilient when the fingers are moved. (25)

According to Harvey, the action of the heart creates hardness, which is the result of physical tension. According to Milton, Herbert, and Donne, a heart becomes hardened when a person does not act according to God’s direction; hardness is a result of a spiritual tension between God’s will and an individual’s desire. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton explains how Satan’s heart is notably obdurate, “hardening in his strength” when he acts against God’s will (1.572). Like Satan, Pharaoh is repeatedly described with a “stubborn heart, but still as Ice / More hard’nd after thaw” due to his unwillingness to yield to God’s command to free the Israelites (*PL* 12.193-4). At the exact moment when Adam chooses to sin in *Paradise Lost*, as we saw in chapter four, Adam’s hardened heart is observable in his outward appearance: he is notably “amazed, / Astonied stood and blank . . . Speechless he stood and pale” (9.889-91, 894). In this passage, Milton underscores that Adam’s material body changes because of his spiritual choices. His once God-centered heart is transformed to a fallen, thick, “stonie” heart, which generates a “horror chill” that runs “through his veins.” His decisions affect his material body, heart, and circulatory system. Such a hard heart fights against God’s will and is not only left speechless but also cannot be engraved with the living words of the Spirit. If Adam were to read “The Passion”

at this moment, the poem would not be completed in his heart due to its physical and spiritual impenetrableness.

While Harvey addresses when and how a heart hardens, it is important to remember that Harvey does not describe the hardening process as a necessarily negative movement; rather, the hardening of the heart is a part of the cyclical processes that circulates blood. In the same way, Donne and Milton not only include references to hardened hearts as a negative characteristic but also praise “adamant” and “fixed” hearts in certain circumstances. In the last line of “Holy Sonnet I,” Donne reveres God who “thou like adamant draw mine iron heart” (14). God is praised for being hard and “incapable of being broken, dissolved, or penetrated” while at the same time the speaker laments his own “iron” and hardened heart (*OED* “adamant” def. 1). Similarly, in *Paradise Regained*, the Son is praised for standing “upright” and “fixed” upon the pinnacle when tempted by Satan, illuminating that he has an “upright heart and pure” that remains steady and hardened against Satan’s temptations (*PR* 4.551, *PL* 1.18). Stony hearts should not be confused with “adamant” hearts or even “fixed” hearts in many seventeenth-century poems. Early modern theological poets such as Milton, Herbert, and Donne actively engage the reader to search for not only the literal meaning of each word but, more importantly, the spiritual meaning of each word in each situation; therefore, the context that describes an adamant, fixed, stony, or fleshy heart cannot be overlooked. We have seen that the many and diverse descriptions of the heart in seventeenth-century theological poetry work together to illuminate the ways in which early modern poets are expanding on and experimenting with unstable anatomical theories as well as emerging philosophical theories that specifically describe the role of the heart in the formation of the self. Milton incorporates varied references to stones,

monuments, and tombs throughout “The Passion,” which work together to powerfully contrast his conclusion that a soft, fleshy heart is the ultimate place of poetry and sacrifice.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton explains that once Adam and Eve repent and soften their hearts to God’s will, God then helps man after the Fall: when people repent the “Spirit within them . . . upon their hearts shall write, / To guide them in all truth” (12.488-90). Milton explains that God’s Spirit writes on a believer’s soft heart, which creates a lasting record each person carries with him. This record, in turn, prompts each person to follow God’s commands and further transforms each heart to become fleshier. The inward softness is then observable in the fruit of a person’s words, beliefs, actions, and physical body, just as the Son’s heart in *Paradise Regained* is praised as open to God’s direction, possessing “the perfect shape” and consistency (3.11). In “The Passion” Milton illustrates that a soft heart attuned to God is not only transformed, but houses a spiritual poem of salvation that supersedes all mortal writing. To an extent, Milton denigrates the writing that was central to his life and career when he suggests that mortal composition falters before the spiritual composition that represents true textuality; Milton praises God’s writing above his own verse not to trivialize his own work but to magnify God’s. His verse is merely a vehicle used by God to transform hearts.

In *Paradise Lost*, after the Fall Adam’s heart is no longer perfectly joined to Eve’s, but God provides his Spirit to write upon man’s heart and serve as man’s guide:

And I will place within them as a guide  
My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,  
Light after light well us'd they shall attain,  
And to the end persisting, safe arrive.  
This my long sufferance and my day of grace  
They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;  
But hard be hard'nd, blind be blinded more,  
That they may stumble on, and deeper fall; (3. 194-201)



If man accepts the spirit as his guide, his heart will not be hardened. In *The Matter of Revolution*, John Rogers argues that when Michael leaves Adam and Eve in the final lines of *Paradise Lost*, there is a “momentous shift in the relationship between deity and creature” (176). Rogers explains that when Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, they are no longer guided by God, but by “the law of nature that may always work toward the moral good of man but that can be distinguished from the direct intervention of an anthropomorphic God” (176). I agree with Rogers that there is a shift in the relationship between God and man when Adam and Eve are expelled; however, this shift is not a movement away from God and towards the law of nature, but rather a shift from externally walking and talking with God to internally listening to and learning from God inside fleshy hearts. Man is not left completely alone after the Fall. In post-exilic Eden, Adam and Eve are deprived of the visible presence of the angel who “disappears” and of the tangible companionship of God who walked with them, but are we to forget that God now inhabits their hearts (12.640)? Are we to forget that “the spirit within shall on the heart engrave” and that God’s Spirit continues with man if man chooses to have a fleshy, God-centered heart (12.524)? In similar terms, “The Passion” should not be viewed as an incomplete poem, but a poem that Milton pointedly ends in order to illuminate the heart as the appropriate place to complete a true passion poem. Modern scholars interpret and analyze the “The Passion” as a literary work and do not approach it as a personal, transforming vehicle; however, Milton did not write his poem for literary scholars. He wrote “The Passion” to edify his readers and bring them closer to God. Our mode of interpretation has been flawed, but if we shift our view, it becomes clear that Milton crafts “The Passion” to spur his audience to realize that their heart is the most appropriate place to finish a passion poem. Milton rouses his readers to recognize that the heart and not a piece of paper is where the divine communicates with man

and the place where man must ultimately decide if he believes in Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection.

Writing before Milton, Herbert confesses in his poem "The Altar" that his heart is "such a stone" that needs to be broken in order to be an appropriate offering as well as an appropriate medium for accepting the Spirit's engraving; only a "broken altar . . . Whose parts are as thy hand did frame" can be recreated as a fleshy and living sacrifice (6, 1-3). Twice in this sixteen-line poem Herbert acknowledges that the heart has "parts," thus illuminating not only the spiritual characteristics of a "whole heart" but also the physical structure of the heart, which, as in Harvey's work, possesses both ventricles and atriums. Herbert also realizes that hard hearts are a product of man's unwillingness to release control to God, much like Harvey's explanation that hearts harden due to tension. Herbert does not want his heart to be like Nabal's heart, the fool in the Old Testament whose heart "died within him, and he became as a stone" (1 Samuel 25:37). In the last lines of the poem, Herbert incorporates an allusion to Ezekiel 11:19, a verse Milton refers to in his passion poem: "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh." This allusion accentuates the speaker's desire for his heart to be transformed not only physically but also spiritually; however, because Herbert completes "The Altar" with written words he, unlike Milton, allows his poem and not his actual heart to be his sacrifice.

For Milton, God's writing on the fleshy heart is the central act in the creation of an ethical, moral identity. Before the Fall, Eve's heart is extremely soft and therefore vulnerable to being penetrated. The softness of her heart is both a positive and a negative attribute. Her soft heart is similar to the airy bodies of the angels and is thus close to God and his will. However, Eve's soft heart also allows Satan's words easily to enter her consciousness:

He ended, and his words replete with guile  
Into her heart too easie entrance won:  
Fixt on the Fruit she gaz'd, which to behold  
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound  
Yet rung of his perswasive words, impregn'd  
With Reason, to her seeming, and with Truth; (9.733-8)

Satan knows that the heart is the seat of man's conscience and thus targets Eve's heart with his guileful words.<sup>65</sup> Earlier in the epic, Milton accentuates Satan's strategy: "So gloz'd the Tempter, and his Proem tun'd; / Into the Heart of Eve his words made way" (9.549-550). Satan knows that the heart is that which directs all beings; thus he directs his words straight into Eve's soft heart. Satan is also fully aware that a heart attuned to God saves a man, just as a heart contaminated with evil can damn a man. For Milton, the heart guides each individual and stores that which is both most volatile and lasting. Milton recognizes the danger of an outsider other than God penetrating a person's heart and thus understands the potential danger of completing his passion poem in written form rather than allowing God's Spirit to work in each individual's heart.

Milton, Herbert, and Donne all accentuate the heart as the center of the human body and consciousness, believing that all thinking and feeling flow out of the heart. These three poets accentuate the importance of Christ's perfect heart and willingness to sacrifice himself on the cross to restore believers' hearts. In *Paradise Lost*, the Son volunteers his life for fallen man's life: "Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life / I offer, on mee let thine anger fall" (3.236-7).<sup>66</sup> The Son offers his life for humanity in order to fulfill his father's promise to offer grace and soften hearts: "I will cleer thir senses dark, / What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts / To

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<sup>65</sup> Romans 2:15 explains, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

<sup>66</sup> By using "life for life" here, Milton harkens back to Mosaic law. Many cite this law as justification for revenge, but it actually provided a redemptive measure designed to limit revenge and the types of restitution demanded for wrongs and injuries.

pray, repent, and bring obedience due” (3.188-90). Christ’s death and physically broken heart on the cross is at the center of man’s ability to be saved.

Like Milton in “The Passion,” in “Good Friday” Herbert struggles with how to transcribe Christ’s ultimate suffering on the cross. Herbert is again searching for inspiration, but in this poem he struggles not simply to find adequate invention or copy poets like Sidney, but to retell Christ’s matchless grief. In the opening lines of “Good Friday,” Herbert wonders “How shall I count what thee befell, / And each grief tell” (3-4). He struggles with how to translate Christ’s inimitable suffering into poetry, first contemplating if he should recount “thy woes . . . according to thy foes” (5-6). He then dismisses his ability to even “score,” or count, Christ’s grief, asserting that the task is humanly impossible (10). Herbert does not know how to bridge the gap between the physical and spiritual realms. His struggle with how to write about Christ’s suffering is more acute in this poem, compared with poems such as “Jordan II” and “Love Unknown,” because, in terms of the overall structure of *The Temple*, Christ’s resurrection is yet to come. The answer to his mystery has not yet been revealed because he is waiting for a spiritual answer embedded in Christ’s resurrection; yet, there are hints of Herbert’s ultimate realization that by having the redeemed Christ write on his soft, fleshy heart and take authorship of his verse, he will be able to simply “copie out” the text that has been written in his heart (“Jordan II” 18). Because he does not share Milton’s monist beliefs, Herbert does not conclude that he should abandon writing all together; he clings to a belief that God can write for him rather than a belief that the physical words of his poetry and the spiritual writing in his heart are inseparable.

In the next stanza of “Good Friday,” Herbert imagines that the solution to his creative problem lies in internalizing Christ’s suffering, not only spiritually, but digestively:

Then let each houre  
Of my whole life one grief devoure;  
That thy distress through all may runne,  
And be my sunne. (13-16)

Herbert turns to his physical body to aid him in deciphering how to understand Christ's grief. He imagines that "each houre" can physically "devoure" Christ's suffering as if it is something time can eat. This also alludes to the belief in transubstantiation, when Christ's body and blood are believed to be transformed into physical bread and wine for believers to eat as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday. The physical and the spiritual realms overlap, but again, having time "devoure" Christ's grief is not Herbert's final solution. By beginning the next stanza with "Or rather let," Herbert acknowledges that if time could digestively internalize Christ's suffering, it would only be a provisional and inadequate solution. For the Eucharist to have power, sinful man must devour the pure and sacrificial body and blood of Christ. For Herbert, the Eucharist represents the physical, and thus impure, being transformed into the spiritual and pure. Herbert, unlike Milton, yearns for his poetry to serve a similar Eucharistic function that can transform impure, human poetry into pure, inspired verse. As we will see, Milton refuses the separation of physical and spiritual that Herbert clings to, and Milton rejects both Eucharistic transformation and poetic purification.

In "Good Friday" Herbert finally realizes that he must ask God to write in his heart with blood:

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. (21-24)

Herbert believes his heart is the correct medium on which to write, but Herbert does not do the actual writing; he only provides the writing surface and, interestingly, the ink—his blood.

Herbert explains that inside “One box” (his heart), both ink and sin coexist. At first glance, it appears that Herbert’s blood alone is the ink; however, it is unclear if this blood is solely the speaker’s or if Christ’s sacrificial blood is mixed with, or even replaces, the speaker’s blood in order to purify it. As we will see in the next stanza, the speaker asks, “oh fill the place,” which suggests the presence of Christ’s sacrificial blood in the speaker’s heart and also helps explain the presence of a never-ending supply of ink that cannot be depleted (29). Herbert’s description also harkens back to Harvey’s theories in *The Circulation of the Blood*, which describes the amount of blood in human bodies as well as how blood replenishes itself. Herbert, by not clearly defining whose blood is the actual ink, blurs the boundary between Christ’s vivifying blood, shed on Good Friday, and the speaker’s sin-laden blood. He approaches the monistic belief of Milton who argues for the existence of “vital warmth / Throughout” all matter, but nonetheless, Herbert clings to a belief in dualism (*PL* 7.236-7). Herbert is not as concerned with the scientific parameters of blood and its circulation as compared to Milton; he is chiefly focused on the spiritual importance of Christ’s purifying blood. Herbert ultimately stops searching for scientific solutions to his dilemma, follows the pattern of mystical Eucharistic purification, and gives up control in “Good Friday”: God takes over as author, He who is to “write there” upon the speaker’s heart (23). Through the process of trying to internalize Christ’s suffering, Herbert finds the spiritual inspiration that manifests itself as a written poem. Herbert’s ability to write poems is thus the physical evidence of his spiritual inspiration and beliefs. In “Good Friday,” Herbert wants his reader to believe that the boundary between the speaker and God, Christ’s blood and the speaker’s blood, his heart and God’s heart, spiritual inspiration and the act of writing, all fluidly intermingle. Herbert here avoids clear distinctions and looks to mystery and

divine intervention to resolve scientific problems for which Milton seeks discernible and natural answers.

In the following stanza, Herbert explains that when God inscribes a long list of woes in his mortal heart, those woes eventually come “to lodge there” within his heart (27). He internalizes Christ’s suffering so that it takes up a physical residence in his heart. Herbert longs for these marks of sacrifice to “keep possession with thy grace”; however, this is not how the poem concludes (29-30). Because Christ’s resurrection is yet to come in terms of the sequence of Herbert’s collection of poems and Herbert has yet to hear the consoling words of his “Dear Friend” in “Love Unknown,” Herbert worries that the writing in his heart, and even perhaps Christ’s residence there, is not permanent. He hopes that the new inscription in his heart will not allow “sinne [to] take courage and return / And all the writings blot or burn,” but he fears that this blotting and burning of text could possibly happen (31-32). Herbert believes that Christ’s blood can crowd out the sin in his heart, but he also is acutely aware of his fallen nature and the ever-present temptation of sin. Herbert’s lament is like the Apostle Paul’s cry of anguish:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 7:23-25)

Like Paul, Herbert struggles to reconcile the war between his sinful nature and his redeemed soul. By the end of “Good Friday,” Herbert is concerned that his now soft, malleable heart will eventually re-harden. However, through the course of *The Temple*, Herbert learns that the only true and lasting poems are those inspired by God, written upon his heart, and not the lifeless poems written by self-inspiration that is laden with “curling metaphors” and numerous “notions in [his] brain” (“Jordan II” 5, 7). Yet, unlike Milton, Herbert completes his passion poem on actual paper, asserting that God himself is the author who leads him to write words with ink.

Throughout many of the opening poems of *The Temple*, Herbert fluctuates between his intimacy with God and feelings of remoteness and disconnection from God. This cycle of searching for inspiration, finding solace in God's ability to "write there" upon his heart and in his poems, and then fearing that the writing may be blotted or burned, is a curious path Herbert revisits again and again (23). By the conclusion of *The Temple*, in poems such as "Love Unknown," Herbert succeeds in ending this cycle of doubt by relying on the teachings of Paul in Ephesians 2:10a: "For we are His workmanship."<sup>67</sup> In this verse, the word *workmanship* comes from the Greek word *poiema*, which is the basis of the English word "poem." Thus, a re-shaped and transformed author and his heart—and by extension, the readers themselves and their hearts—are the living work that will avoid being ultimately blotted and burned. For Herbert, a person whose heart is inscribed with God's lasting impression is one who can give over ownership of his life and words to God and become the true poem, the lasting masterpiece. While acknowledging the belief that man's heart is God's lasting masterpiece, Herbert still writes his passion poem on paper rather than allowing the poem to only exist in his heart. Through the process of writing *The Temple*, Herbert reconstitutes his verse as ultimately being the physical manifestation and evidence of God's spiritual inspiration that is "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3). Unlike Milton's belief in monism, Herbert's belief in the separation of the physical and spiritual realms permits him to offer poetry on the crucifixion of Christ as means by which to be transformed and purified.

Herbert struggles to transform himself as an author by reimagining his verse as the word of God; however, in "On Shakespeare," Milton does not merely reimagine his words as the

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<sup>67</sup> Philippians 1:6 compliments Ephesians 2:10: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 2:12-13 has the added warning that God's work *within* in no way relieves one of the responsibility to work *out* that which He produces by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.



words of God but reconstructs what embodies a lasting monument. As explained in chapter four, Milton's first published poem illustrates that physical monuments and printed words are not as lasting and valuable as their ability to leave an imprint on the human heart. Like poets before him such as Spenser, Jonson, and Shakespeare, Milton redefines the monument topos, but, unlike earlier poets, Milton grounds his conception of the heart as a physical text in the writings of not only the Apostle Paul, but also the works of Augustine. Both Paul and Augustine emphasize the heart as a physical, yet everlasting text engraved by God's hand. In "On Shakespeare," as well as *Paradise Lost* and "The Passion," Milton uses the contrasting images of lifeless, rigid stone and spiritually impressionable fleshy hearts to redefine what constitutes a lasting monument: he ingeniously links the Christian belief in spiritual salvation to his definition of a "lasting" and "live-long Monument" ("On Shakespeare" 8) in order to show that "the Spirit within / Shall on the heart engrave" (*PL* 12.523-4). Milton transforms the traditional monument topos of a book or poem to the eternal engraving in transformed hearts. For Milton, the letter kills and the spirit saves, unlike Herbert, who uses the letter to reveal the spirit.

According to Marlin Blaine, the most permanent monuments during the English Renaissance were considered to be books or written documents. John Weever, a contemporary of Milton, claims in his *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631) that "bookes, or writings" were viewed as the most lasting monuments. Like Horace, who claims his Odes stand as a *monumentum aere perennius* ("a monument more lasting than bronze"; [Odes, III.30]), Edmund Spenser hoped that his *Epithalamion* would be "for short time an endlesse monument" (1.433). While Spenser limits the power of his written words to a temporary impression, Shakespeare writes in "Sonnet 55,"

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;

But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time. (1-4)

Shakespeare's sonnet, a poem Milton responded to in his "On Shakespeare," elevates "powerful rhyme" over "unswept stone." Ben Jonson, like Herbert in "Good Friday," further expands the changing literary motif to include the poet himself. Jonson writes in his preface to Shakespeare's *First Folio* (likely another work in the forefront of Milton's mind when writing his sonnet for the *Second Folio*),

Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,  
And art aliue still, while thy Booke doth liue,  
And we haue wits to read, and praise to giue. (ll.22-24)

Numerous writers redefined what constituted a lasting monument, but these writers founded their revised definitions on the written text or the actual poet. Milton, however, extended the monument motif further than his literary predecessors and grounded his beliefs in the writing of the early church fathers as well as his belief that spiritual communication with God's Spirit supersedes written language. The impression made in the reader's heart, not the verse or even the poet, represents the eternal text that will serve as God's ultimate testament:

Thou in the wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a live-long Monument.  
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavoring art  
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each *heart*  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book,  
Those Delphic lines *with deep impression took*,  
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,  
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving; ("On Shakespeare," emphasis  
mine 7-14)

Blaine argues that "Milton contrives to have both a physical and a spiritual monument, combining the classical desire for concrete commemoration with a Puritan distrust of icons" (222). Milton, however, is not merely incorporating his Puritan distrust of icons; he is actually transforming his conception of the monument to link the internalization of poetry with his belief

in a spiritual salvation. The book of the heart is real and constitutes for Milton the ultimate text. Nonetheless, in “On Shakespeare,” Milton does emphasize the power that a man’s written words can have on hearts, which is akin to the Spirit of God’s power to write in hearts. Furthermore, in Milton’s first poem, Shakespeare has died, whereas in “The Passion,” Christ dies and returns to life. The impression is that Shakespeare’s words offer “fancy,” while the inscription that God’s Spirit writes in hearts offers salvation (13).

While there are similarities between “On Shakespeare” and “The Passion” that illuminate Milton’s desire to recreate what constitutes a lasting monument, it is important to remember that for Milton, Shakespeare is not the most influential writer—God and His Spirit are. Milton explains that Shakespeare’s “Delphic lines with deep impression took,” correlating Shakespeare with Apollo, the Greek god of poetry, and not with the Christian God of the Scriptures (12). Milton praises Shakespeare for his words that leave an impression on hearts, but he does not give Shakespeare the same status as God’s Spirit, who writes with divine power and grace on hearts. This can be seen in the contrasting conclusions of “On Shakespeare” and “The Passion.” In “On Shakespeare,” after he suggests how words can leave an impression on hearts, Milton incorporates references to “marble,” “sepulcher’d,” and “tomb”; he returns to the physical world of hard stone. In “The Passion,” he does not abandon the importance of a fleshy heart attuned to God but rather continues to explore the private, spiritual sphere of the heart. Milton does not return to the idea of a physical tombstone in “The Passion” because a gravestone for Christ is not necessary or meaningful; unlike Shakespeare, Christ is not dead and his vitality lives on in human hearts.

In his passion poem, Milton recognizes that Christ’s death and resurrection, not the poem itself or even the image of Christ on the cross, has the power to save. Milton does not fail to

complete the poem, but rather chooses to construct a poem that ends with “nothing” in order to promote the importance of the sacrificial action of Christ and of the writing the spirit has transcribed in his heart. Milton famously ends “The Passion” with the explanatory note that “This subject the author finding to be above the years he had, when he wrote it, and *nothing satisfied* with what was begun, left it unfinished” (emphasis mine). Ending the poem with nothing—actual silence and a void on the physical page—satisfies because the silence directs each reader to finish the poem of Christ’s death and resurrection in his heart. The written text does not save; the belief in Christ’s death and “satisfaction” on the cross engraved in each believer’s heart saves. Christ’s Passion pays mankind’s sinful debt in full, not Milton’s poem “The Passion.” In book three of *Paradise Lost*, God the Father explains that his Son will save man through “The rigid satisfaction, death for death” (3.212). Later in book twelve, Michael tells Adam that Christ’s crucifixion generates satisfaction:

For this he shall live hated, be blasphem'd,  
Seis'd on by force, judg'd, and to death condemnd  
A shameful and accurst, naild to the Cross  
By his own Nation, slaine for bringing Life;  
But to the Cross he nailes thy Enemies,  
The Law that is against thee, and the sins  
Of all mankinde, with him there crucifi'd,  
Never to hurt them more who rightly trust  
In this his satisfaction; so he dies (12.411-9)

Christ’s passion atones man of his sin, for Christ himself takes man’s place and becomes the victim and the embodiment of propitiation. The absence of words, the “nothing,” is what definitively satisfies Milton’s passion poem because Milton understood that he needed to stop writing this poem and look instead to what was written in his heart. Milton’s poem is a complete work in that it accentuates his inability to write such a poem; the work on the climactic crucifixion of Christ must be incomplete on paper in order to be appropriately finished in his

heart. Much like the early modern English satirist Stephen Gosson who criticizes the act of watching plays, proclaiming, “Shall we that vaunte of the law, of the Prophets, of the Gospel, so looke, so gaze, so gape upon plaies, that as men that stare on the head of Medusa and are turned into stones, wee freeze unto yse in our own follies,” Milton leaves his poem unfinished to emphasize his disapproval of turning Christ’s passion into a visual spectacle (180). He does not want his readers to look upon his poetry as if it was Medusa’s alluring, yet destructive eyes that turn the viewer to lifeless stone. If Milton were to have completed his passion poem on paper it would have served the same purpose as Medusa’s eyes: it would have attracted readers with an outward luster and turned their hearts to stone rather than rousing readers to allow God’s Spirit to vitalize their hearts.

Milton carefully printed his passion poem unfinished in both the 1645 and the 1673 editions of his poems, pointing to the belief that he meant for it to end with “nothing,” for nothing was the appropriate and intact ending to a written poem that is ultimately meant to be an internal experience for each believer. There is meaning in his silence, for, just as in music, moments of silence in poetry are often the most significant. The moments of silence point to what is most important and prompt the reader to look internally for meaning. Milton ends by explaining that he “left it *unfinisht*,” but by choosing to use the word “unfinished,” he connects his final words to that of Christ’s final words on the cross: “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Greek word used in John for “finished” is *teleo*, which means “To finish a work, to fill up completely or fulfill.” On man’s behalf, Christ finishes what man cannot. Christ’s sacrifice and death finishes, or brings to a conclusion, man’s inability to be reconciled to God after the Fall. Milton purposefully ends his passion poem exactly where he wanted; his poem is an illustration

that man cannot finish Christ's passion. Also, by publishing his poem Milton renders the unfinished work complete.

In the opening stanzas of "The Passion," the speaker explains that although the "joyous news of heavenly Infant's birth" brought with it "ethereal mirth" and lively music, his tone must change not just to "notes of saddest woe" and "softer airs" but to "viol still." The instruments follow a trajectory from liveliness to stillness, accenting that the most appropriate song for the subject of Christ's suffering and death is silence:

Erewhile of music, and ethereal mirth,  
Wherewith the stage of Air and Earth did ring,  
And joyous news of heavenly Infant's birth,  
My muse with Angels did divide to sing;  
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,  
In wintry solstice like the shortened light  
Soon swallowed up in dark and long outliving night. (1-7)

The speaker explains that his "muse with Angels did divide to sing," which can mean either that his muse left him to join the angels joyfully celebrating Christ's birth, or that his muse and the angels each took on different musical parts, "divided," and sang together. Yet both alternatives may be correct, for his muse from the "Nativity Ode" may cease to sing here because the song that must eventually be sung in "The Passion" is silence. By not singing in "The Passion," his muse assumes the active role of silence, much like the angels in the end of "The Nativity Ode" who "sit in order serviceable" (244). Not singing, just as not finishing a poem, are active and appropriate responses to Christ's passion.<sup>68</sup> In his poem "When I consider how my light is spent," Milton similarly asserts, "they also serve who only stand and wait" (14). Silence, like waiting, can be an active and important participation in God's ethical universe. At the end of the

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<sup>68</sup> Silence in Scripture often indicates awe and anticipation of God's judgment on evil, or the acknowledgement of something beyond the response of words. Isaiah 47: 4-5: "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness"; Revelation 8:1: "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour; Zephaniah 1:7: "be silent in the presence of the Lord God." Christ's death is worthy of silence in that it is both the mark of what is lost in Eden and the means of the restoration and refreshment of all things still to come.

second stanza of “The Passion,” Milton explains that “he for us did freely undergo . . . labours huge and hard, too hard for human wight” (12-14). Milton draws the reader’s attention to the need for Christ to take on man’s task, just as Milton himself allows for God to complete his poem, which he also believes to be “too hard for human wight.” Milton purposefully delineates the gap between Christ’s actual suffering on the cross and man’s inability to fully understand Christ’s sacrifice.

In the third stanza, Christ, the “Sovran Priest” (15) stoops “his regal head” (15) and enters the “Poor fleshly Tabernacle” of the human body (17). Christ is fully God while also fully man. He chooses to take on human form to sacrifice himself for sinful believers. He is out of place, just as the speaker feels that his words are not rich enough to accurately describe Christ’s passion. Christ is described with a “starry front low-roofed beneath the skies” because his divinity has been encapsulated in a frail human form (18). The speaker laments, “Oh, what a mask was there, what a disguise,” accentuating both the mask that Christ assumed to become man, as well as the mask the speaker feels he must adopt if he is to describe the ultimate sacrifice of his Lord (19). This single line further illuminates the speaker’s desire to abandon human speech and achieve instead the sincerity and comfort of words written in his own heart—he does not want to wear a mask nor write a “masked” poem about the death and resurrection of his savior. Milton ultimately does not want to articulate Christ’s crucifixion in mere mortal language when the true poem of Christ’s sacrifice needs to be written in human hearts. Nevertheless, the speaker continues and explains that “the stroke of death he must abide” (20). Not only is the speaker acknowledging that Christ must die, but he emphasizes that the stroke of his pen must die as well. If he were to keep writing, an additional movement of his pen would be a stroke of death and not life. The poet knows that he cannot depend on himself to adequately

express Christ's death; throughout the poem he reveals that he must retreat to the poem written in his heart for true satisfaction.

"These latter scenes" of Christ's death and burial "confine" the poet's "roving verse/ To this Horizon" (22-3). He is struck by the intense feelings associated with Christ's death and confined to understanding Christ's passion with the narrow lens of "this Horizon" on Earth (23). The speaker refers to Christ as "my Phoebus," accentuating that Christ is not just a muse, but he is Apollo, the god of poetry and the Father of Muses. He is the "sun" and the "Son," the origin of inspiration who surpasses all other muses, yet also chained to the earth through his sacrifice and assumption of human form. The mortal poet can only express his thoughts in earthly terms, yet the subject and sacrifice are divine. The poet is limited by his mortality, and hence his poetry can only be a restrained and ponderous version of the true text that occupies his heart. Christ, simultaneously both mortal and divine, can achieve what the poet can only aspire to through his poetry. The poet and his song are mortal, although if written on the heart through the intercession of Christ, the poet's song can achieve a type of divinity.

Agitated, the speaker complains that other poets, namely Marco Girolamo Vida, an Italian poet known for his famous and verbose Latin epic, *The Christiad* (1535), depicting the life and death of Christ in six books, had written "loud o're the rest" of Christ's "Godlike acts, and his temptations fierce" (27). Unlike Vida, Milton yearns to write about Christ in "softer airs" and "softer strings," emphasizing that a quiet, soft, pensive, and eventually, "still" tone is more appropriate to Christ's unique achievements than loud pageantry. According to the speaker, boisterous outward shows of pomp and overdeveloped descriptions of Christ suffering on the cross are forms of idolatry. Just as Milton accentuates the need for a soft, quiet heart in "The Passion," in *Samson Agonistes*, Milton illuminates that Samson must move beyond the



boisterous words and actions of Herapha; Samson, both a figure of Christ and man, must not follow the letter of the law, but must learn to accept the “rousing motions” of the spirit written in his heart in order to lead him to his sacrificial death. Through his death, Samson generates a “calm of mind all passion spent” (1942) that mirrors Milton’s “viol still” in “The Passion” (28). Milton does not want to be like the raging Harapha or like Marco Girolamo Vida, who make the focus of Christ and his crucifixion an outward spectacle rather than an inward knowledge. Throughout his works, Milton longs for his audience to look past the outward show and retreat to the inscription written in their hearts. In this stanza of “The Passion,” Milton repeats the word “soft,” accentuating the need for the speaker, as well as the reader, to have a soft heart that is physically, spiritually, and audibly attuned to God’s prophetic voice.

In the next stanza, Milton asks night to befriend him and “work [his] flattere’d fancy to belief,” much like Herbert asks in his opening lines of the *The Temple* for his muse to “turn delight into a sacrifice” (“The Church-porch” 6). Both poets long for their words to lead readers to belief in Christ. Yet, in this particular seven-line stanza, the speaker refers to himself five times. He laments that “my sorrows are too dark” and suggests that “the leaves should all be black whereon I write” (34). The speaker is fixated on himself and his writing rather than on Christ and the inscription that the spirit authored in his heart. He yearns for the paper on which he writes to be black, as if he was writing a seventeenth-century funeral announcement, which was often printed on black paper with white letters (Luxon 1). He wishes he could write, but he knows he does not have the capability to write a poem on the passion of Christ. He explains that “The leaves *should* all be black” because he believes the topic is beyond human expression and that blank pages of silence would be the most appropriate poem (33, emphasis mine).

Then, as if jolted out of a spiraling despair, the speaker suddenly changes focus from his mortal demise and imagines Ezekiel's chariot ascending into heaven: "See, see the chariot, and those rushing wheels, / That whirled the prophet up at Chebar flood" (36-7). The speaker, much like the prophet Ezekiel, explains, "My spirit some transporting Cherub feels," accentuating that he is moving away from himself as author and toward accepting the divine as author (38). The speaker powerfully imagines his soul "sitting" in "holy vision" in a pool of Christ's "guiltless blood" (40-1). The poet is not aggressively acting or creating; rather, he is immersed in Christ's blood and sitting in a "pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fit" (42). This image is very important, for it shows the speaker releasing control and resting in the blood of his savior. Like other seventeenth-century thinkers, Milton likely believed Christ died on the cross due to his own blood building up in his chest (Davis 183-187). The speaker imagines "sitting in blood," while quite literally Christ drowns in his own blood on the cross. Christ's drowning gives believers life, just as Milton's "sitting in blood" produces his "ecstatic fit" of both writing poetry and retreating to an interior state of silence and pensiveness.<sup>69</sup>

Unlike the devils in *Paradise Lost* who are trapped in a "dungeon, not our safe retreat," and are left with "no thought of flight, / None of retreat," Milton emphasizes the solace that believers can find when they retreat to the inscription written in their hearts that is a taste of the larger solace believers will enjoy in heaven (2.317, 6.236-7). In "On Time," a poem also most likely written in 1630, Milton similarly emphasizes that believers can look forward to the time when they "shall for ever sit, / Triumphant over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time" much like the speaker in "The Passion" who imagines his soul being free while "sitting" in "holy vision":

When once our heav'nly-guided soul shall clime,

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<sup>69</sup> Milton only uses the word "retreat" four times in *Paradise Lost*. Each use refers to the devils in hell yearning for a retreat that is no longer within their grasp. They realize that hell is their "dungeon, not our safe retreat / Beyond his Potent arm" (2.317-8). They are left with "no retreat" or a "faint retreat" that is only an illusion.

Then all this Earthy grosnes quit,  
Attir'd with Stars, we shall for ever sit,  
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time. (19-22)

In “On Time” Milton is looking forward to his soul climbing away from “this Earthly grosnes,” just as he desires to be transported to heaven by Ezekiel’s transporting chariot in “The Passion.” Both poems illuminate Milton’s belief that in being still and silently “sitting” in the sacrificial blood of Christ man completely experiences the power of the divine.

Milton alludes to Ezekiel in “The Passion” because Ezekiel was called to prophesy specifically against Israel’s worship of false idols and to denounce those who were prophesying out of their own imagination rather than from God’s prompting:

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!” (Ezekiel 13:1-4)

Milton equates himself with Ezekiel because he, like the prophet, wants to warn others not to follow their own imagination but rather follow the Spirit of God. Like Ezekiel, Milton shuns idolatry in any form, whether the idolatry of a graven or a textual image.

Ezekiel was also tested by God to see if he would obey commands difficult to understand. Near the Chebar River, God instructs Ezekiel to physically eat a scroll of “lamentations, mourning and woe” (2:10). God did not want Ezekiel to merely read and understand the words on the scroll; he instructed Ezekiel to devour the scroll so that it would be assimilated into his very being. Like Ezekiel, the prophet Jeremiah explains, “Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16). Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah ingest the words written by God, which, in turn, fills their hearts. Milton similarly emphasizes the importance of

internally knowing and ingesting God's Word—both Scriptures and the Spirit's personal promptings—rather than placing too much importance on words inscribed on paper. In “The Passion” Milton devours the end of his own poem, showing God obedience and respect as well as acknowledging his inability to adequately describe Christ's crucifixion.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker imagines that perhaps he will be able to write his verse on the “sad sepulchral Rock / That was the casket of Heaven's richest store” (43-4). The image of a hard stone that then becomes a “softened Quarry” captures his attention, as if he is dreaming that his own hardened heart might be transformed into a soft vessel on which to write. He yearns to understand the divine sacrifice of the Son, but he is left only to ponder that perhaps his tears are “so well instructed . . . That they would fittly fall in order'd Characters” (48-9). This image of his tears falling in ordered characters onto the rock is both a prayer and a desire, an imitation of the beautiful and wildly free prayers of Adam and Eve before the Fall:

Thir Orisons, each Morning duly paid  
In various style, for neither various style  
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise  
Thir Maker, in fit strains pronounc't or sung  
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence  
Flowd from thir lips, in Prose or numerous Verse,  
More tuneable then needed Lute or Harp  
To add more sweetness, and they thus began. (5.145-152)

Adam and Eve's morning prayers of praise to their father, which “flowd from thir lips” much like the blood of Christ that flowed from his body on the cross, are beautiful because they are “Unmeditated” and “various” (5.149.) In “The Passion,” Milton learns that even if he could have “well instructed” and “ordered” tears write for him, those tears would miss the mark, for the best poetry is free, unordered, and originates in the heart. Due to the Fall, man can no longer generate “unmediated” verse like that of Adam and Eve; hence, Milton, when confronted with writing about the most dramatic and spiritually important event in his belief system, must be like the

Psalmist and “Be still, and know that I am God,” listening to the Spirit rather than writing from his own imagination (Psalm 46:10). After the Fall, only Christ can have “such prompt eloquence” flow from his body like blood and into hearts.

As the Son explains in *Paradise Regained*, man cannot take on the weight of the cross, but must surrender to God’s power: “Ere I the promis’d Kingdom can attain, / Or work Redemption for mankind, whose sins’ / Full weight must be transferr’d upon my head” (1.265-67). The Son explains that a transfer must take place; he must take over, for man cannot handle the weight of the cross, just as Milton cannot handle the weight and significance of writing about Christ’s passion. By not writing, Milton further illuminates that the tragedy of the cross is not Christ’s death, but the fact that individuals miss the gap between man’s sin and God’s love and suffering for man. According to Milton, man cannot understand the love of God until man acknowledges his own sin and releases himself from being in control, or in this situation, releases himself from writing a poem. Milton’s refusal, not failure, to complete “The Passion” is a warning to others that it is wrong to minimize God’s sinlessness and maximize man’s goodness. The opposite is true; by abruptly ending “The Passion,” Milton reverentially acknowledges the distance between God’s love and his own sin and inadequacies.<sup>70</sup>

In the final stanza, Milton offers one more suggestion before retreating to complete stillness: perhaps, like the prophet Jeremiah, he should “Take up a weeping on the Mountains wilde” and allow his grief to create a “race of mourners on some pregnant cloud” (55-6). Milton imagines that if he were to outwardly weep on a quiet mountain side his loud sorrows would only beget a mythological race. Milton’s complicated image alludes to the story of Ixion in

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<sup>70</sup> Milton is like Job who reaches a place in his spiritual journey where he must reevaluate life and his beliefs: “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further” (Job 40:4-5). Job’s resignation and silence leads him to a greater understanding of God and himself.

Pindar's *Pythian Odes* where Ixion, believing he was ravishing Hera, actually ravishes a raincloud put in Hera's place by Zeus, which begets a race of centaurs. Milton does not want to beget a poem that is akin to a centaur: both a creation of his own imagination and God's inspiration. His desire is for God's Spirit to directly impress each believer's heart with God's intimate love. Only then will lasting salvation be born.

Near the end of *Paradise Regained*, a poem almost void of classical allusion, Milton again alludes to the story of Ixion. Satan tempts the Son to "be famous then / By wisdom," but the Son rejects Satan's temptation explaining that the wisdom of the Stoics and great philosophers of antiquity are empty of the true wisdom that can only come from God (4.221-2):

For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,  
Or subtle shifts conviction to evade.  
Alas what can they teach, and not mislead;  
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,  
And how the world began, and how man fell  
Degraded by himself, on grace depending?  
Much of the Soul they talk, but all awrie,  
And in themselves seek vertue, and to themselves  
All glory arrogate, to God give none,  
Rather accuse him under usual names,  
Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite  
Of mortal things. Who therefore seeks in these  
True wisdom, finds her not, or by delusion  
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,  
An empty cloud. (4.307-321)

The Stoics' wisdom is rooted in their own beliefs and not the wisdom of God. The Son warns that while they talk of the Soul and virtue, they are deceived like Ixion. Their writings are only "empty cloud[s]" because they rely upon their own imagination rather than a divine inscription in their heart. Just as the Son rejects Satan's temptation to rely on human wisdom and imagination, Milton rejects finishing his passion poem in order to emphasize that the most powerful and meaningful poems are written internally. Both "The Passion" and *Paradise Regained* underscore

that inaction and stillness are active and appropriate responses. Milton also emphasizes that writing an elaborate allusion to Ixion to personify his grief in “The Passion” is not the correct way to express the Son’s passion. All of his attempts at writing, no matter how complicated, miss the mark of capturing Christ’s ultimate suffering. Hence, the perfect answer to his dilemma is not to write a poem but to give authorship to God and allow him to write in his heart.

As we saw in “Good Friday,” Herbert also gives authorship to God but he explains this transference while finishing his poem. Milton, on the other hand, more aggressively stops writing. Through this act he insists that the absence of words, literally “nothing,” is the correct way to express Christ’s passion. By not completing the poem, Milton accentuates that the Son’s ultimate sacrifice is what allows for the spirit to pour out God’s mercy and love in each believer’s heart. Milton’s purpose in writing “The Passion” is to demonstrate that the spirit’s inscription in hearts is not meant as an outward show, but as an internal experience known intimately by each believer.

Milton understands that the image of Christ on the cross is, as the prophet Isaiah relates, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3). Both Milton and Isaiah believe that the importance and severity of the Son’s crucifixion is far above what man can comprehend. By revealing his terrible struggle to describe the passion in a poem, Milton emphasizes that he does not want to make Christ’s death common or comprehensible. The prophet Isaiah’s response to his theophany—his direct experience of seeing God—is speechlessness. Isaiah cries “Woe is me” and falls at God’s feet because he realizes the magnitude of difference between him and God (Isaiah 6:5). Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* realize their fall, their lowliness and separation from God, and are also temporarily struck “astonied” and speechless (9.890). In a similar way, Milton ends “The

Passion” with “nothing” because he is struck speechless by his awe at Christ’s sacrifice and his belief that the ultimate passion poem is written in the soft, fleshy hearts of believers.

Milton’s “The Passion” embodies Milton’s belief in the inadequacy of poetry alone, while at the same time, illuminates his belief that poetry can potentially trigger an internal change, which in turn, creates an internal text written by God’s Spirit. By definition, this internal text cannot be read by Milton’s audience on paper. So, how then are we to read Milton’s other texts such as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* if poetry is not to be completed on paper? Does Milton change his belief later in his career? Or, is Christ’s passion a distinct topic that must be left unfinished? I contend Milton both allows his belief to evolve and remains steadfast that the topic of Christ’s death supersedes any other event in human history.

In the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, Milton asks for the Spirit’s instruction:

And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sats brooding on the vast Abyss  
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark  
Illumin, what is low raise and support;  
That to the highth of this great Argument  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the wayes of God to men. (1.17-26)

Milton acknowledges the inadequacy of poetry, but as his career progresses, he realizes more clearly that he must use the imperfect vehicle of poetry to lead his readers to a belief in God; yet, the invocation to *Paradise Lost* still emphasizes that “th’ upright heart and pure” is the ultimate temple God’s Spirit prefers. In *Areopagitica* Milton explains that since “virgin Truth” was “hewed into a thousand pieces, and scattered to the four winds,” man must now continuously work to gather up each limb all the while knowing that man “have not found them all, nor ever shall do, till her Master’s second coming” (1276-1283). In the fallen world, man must still strive



to reassemble Truth, all the while knowing it cannot be completed. Milton continues to write poetry well after he chooses to leave “The Passion” unfinished; yet, Milton does not add to his 1630 poem on the crucifixion of Christ, nor does he reattempt such an endeavor, emphasizing that the passion of Christ is a distinct and revered topic that only the Spirit of God can complete inside each believers’ fleshy heart.

Just as Truth is described as being shattered into pieces in *Areopagitica*, in the seventeenth century, Milton, Herbert, and Donne are challenged with combating the first signs of fragmentation of the intertwined relationship between anatomy, philosophy, economics, and theology. This fragmentation is clearly seen in how philosophers such as Descartes and Hobbes re-imagine the function of the heart: Descartes and Hobbes no longer view the heart as both an anatomical organ and the spiritual core of man. Due to the impending separation of the material and spiritual realms, individuals are forced to either choose between a belief in evolving science and a belief in traditional religious tenets, or oppose the separation. Milton, Herbert, and Donne combat the changing tide and choose to not abandon the heart as the spiritual and physical core of man. They confront the widespread scientific changes in the seventeenth century that undermines their doctrines in order to reinforce their belief in the existence of a knowable God.

Milton, Herbert, and Donne, to varying degrees, all struggle to hold onto the heart as the center of man and the place of inspiration and volition. For Herbert, the heart is an exclusive space where the spiritual and physical realms come closest to coalescing. While Herbert never makes the leap to a belief in monism, his descriptions of man’s heart reveals his intense longing for unfallen materiality. Herbert, writing on the cusp on the jolting scientific changes, does not advance the monist theories of Milton, but his descriptions clearly reveal a step towards the later theology of Milton. Donne’s dualistic descriptions of the heart reveal the disturbing struggle he

and other seventeenth-century thinkers faced concerning the nature and relationship of the body and soul. Donne basks in the struggle between the perceived functions of the body and soul, never choosing a side; nonetheless, by not choosing, he continues to affirm that man is both a material and spiritual being. Donne questions his relationship with God not to disprove the existence of his heavenly father but to emphasize that man is subordinate to God and cannot yet fully understand the sacred while bound to the fallen world. And finally, unlike Herbert and Donne, Milton directly combats the fragmentation caused by the scientific upheaval in the seventeenth century and battles to reinforce his belief in a divine, material God who not only communicates with believers but imbues them with vital warmth. Additionally, Milton adamantly reinforces the presence of God working and writing in believers' hearts even when the very nature and understanding of the heart is evolving and moving away from any connection with the divine.

The heart for Milton is both the physical and spiritual core of man that must triumph over any other organ in the body and must persist as a spiritual center. Milton foresaw that if the heart is displaced by the brain, the belief that God creates man and communicates with him in the heart would quickly crumble. For Milton, the impending shift to a belief in the autonomous self destroys any need for and belief in God. Additionally, he realizes that the move to dematerialize the divine was creating fissures in traditional religious thought that would ultimately lead man to expel God altogether. In the midst of splintering beliefs, Milton champions the heart as man's material and spiritual foundation, vigilantly hoping that God would not face an expulsion from man's life, similar to the expulsion Adam and Eve faced after their fall. While Milton most forcefully defends the heart, all three theologically-minded poets champion the heart as the distinct place where belief and science can intermingle, for Milton, Herbert, and Donne all strive

to maintain and convey to their readers a belief that they are not spiritually alone on earth, but have the choice and privilege, by virtue of a connection with the divine in their hearts, to walk hand in hand with their Maker.

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