REACHING THROUGH THE COSMOS: NATURE, THE BIBLE AND TYPOLOGY IN HENRY VAUGHAN'S *SILEX SCINTILLANS*

by

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, Henry Vaughan's poetry has been regarded through one of two avenues: its mystical/philosophical elements and its Biblical elements. Through the exploration and analysis of *Silex Scintillans* it is argued that a more complete understanding of his religious poetry can be found by regarding both elements jointly. Vaughan's knowledge of medieval and renaissance philosophies, along with the general increase in understanding of the natural world, combines with his knowledge of the Bible to provide a conception of the universe that is reflected in his poetry.

Vaughan lived in a period that differs from our own in many areas. During the 1600's, the miracle and mystery of God's creation was gradually being discerned through scientific explanation. Humanity's understanding of the world was growing, and growing more complex; God's sovereignty in the natural world was challenged by scientific theory. The medieval perception of the world as macrocosm and man as "a little world made cunningly" was no longer adequate in explaining the intricacies of existence, and like many of his contemporaries, Vaughan faced the task of assimilating his belief in God with an ever-increasing body of human-derived knowledge of the world.

In a struggle for a more intimate union with the Creator, Vaughan combines the practices of the mystic with the Anglican. Vaughan's poetry is a combination of Scriptural allusion and mystical treatise, of Biblical and natural types. His poems are rich with symbolism and imagery from a variety of sources, making *Silex Scintillans* an intellectual and complex work, effective in evoking the experience of a soul's pilgrimage towards deeper intimacy with its maker.

LOOSENING THE GRIPS OF THE PAST:

TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON HENRY VAUGHAN

Henry Vaughan "is not an intellectual poet and his fundamental attitudes are available to any reader who can respond to the basic contrasts" of his imagery (Parfitt, 58): at least that is what one critic of Vaughan's poetry has written. Moreover, most other commentators have limited their analysis of Vaughan's work to one of two categories--the mystical element of his poetry or the Scriptural influences. Rarely are the two categories viewed jointly, but this is the factor that permits an arguably wrong statement, like the one above, to be made.

The effect of the two critical focuses dominating Vaughan criticism has been divisive, for while some commentators have described Vaughan's work as the effort of a Christian mystic or nature mystic, often characterizing him as a hermeticist who followed the influence of his brother, Thomas,[1] others have felt that the mysticism in Vaughan's poetry has been given *too* much attention and that the impact of the Bible and the religious/political climate are far more influential to his verses. Noel K. Thomas, for instance, comments on the effect of both of these aspects upon the interpretation of Vaughan's poetry.

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[1] See the work of Itrat-Husain, R.A. Durr and Elizabeth Holmes.

> The terrible tumult and bitterness of the sixteen forties and early fifties are not merely the background of *Silex Scintillans*; they provide so many of the tensions and conflicts of much of his major work, and influence his imagery and thought very deeply throughout the whole book. . . . It may well be that the much slighter influences of Platonism, Hermeticism and nature mysticism have distracted critics for so long. But in fact the contribution of the Bible to *Silex Scintillans* is absolutely massive. (12-13)

In truth, both the Bible and Renaissance philosophy have their place in Vaughan's poetry, and to grant one predominance over the other would be to lose the intent of the author. Vaughan combined these two influences in his poems because they both contributed to his understanding of the universe. The effect of such a diverse combination is, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, responsible for the seldom-recognized rich evocativeness of the poems of *Silex Scintillans*, in which the imagery, symbolism, and intellectual content characterize the complex interaction between Vaughan's heart and mind. Vaughan desired that his heart be sensitive to God's call--the evidence of which lies in his poetry; his mind, however, was rooted in seventeenth-century belief, and held a conception of the universe that deserves exploration because it

combines the empirical evidence of the scientific world with the faith of the religious one. Understanding Vaughan's conception of the universe is imperative, especially since it is the soil from which his poetry springs forth.

An examination of the imagery found in Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* and the influences behind these images will attest that he *is* an intellectual poet; his poetic imagination is strikingly complex and easily misinterpreted by modern readers who fail to recognize these influences. Because of the neo-platonism and hermetism which helped to form the intellectual environment of the seventeenth century, and his personal adherence to Anglicanism in a time of Puritan uprising, Vaughan's poetry contains a variety of symbols, images, types, and subject matter from an array of sources, making it impossible to define Vaughan's poetry as having one outstanding feature. Rather, in order to understand the rich complexity of Vaughan's lines, one must be aware of the diverse influences of the Bible, mystical thought, and Renaissance philosophy upon his work and follow the connotative threads evoked by his imagery, which links these influences.

Well into the seventeenth century, the philosophy of the medieval mind remained predominant. As Douglas Bush records, "more than two-fifths of the books printed in England from 1480 to 1640 were religious, and for the years from 1600-1640 the percentage is still higher" (310). God was sovereign, the

world was in His providential care and the patterns of God's movement, his blessing, immanence and creative power, were evident throughout. Also, unlike the individualistic attitude of contemporary Christianity, the Christian mindset of three centuries ago viewed Biblical typology as a source of common spiritual insight which provided the period with a body of standard metaphors, "types," and ideas rooted in the Scriptures.

After all, the Bible, as Joseph Galdon states, was the most influential book of the time.

> Fundamental, and indeed essential, to all this religious thought and writing was the Bible. There can be no doubt that the Bible was the most widely read of all books in the period. There are almost 1000 references to the Bible in Pollard and Redgrave [*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*] and almost 700 more in Wing [*Early English Books, 1641-1700*]. The Bible was a book that was not only read, but was known and used, and the scriptural concept of man and the world exerted a deep and lasting influence even on the ordinary laymen of the period. For it is important to remember that education and culture in the

> seventeenth century were almost entirely ecclesiastical and religious. (12)

Vaughan's work shows the influences common to his century, and the Bible is certainly one of those influences,[2] but during Vaughan's lifetime traditional religion and influences were changing. Despite belief in God's sovereignty and the faith of a majority of the population, an intellectual threat was emerging. Advances in the field of science forced many to reassess their understanding of the world and of God and this is particularly evident in the poetry of Henry Vaughan. With the discoveries of Copernicus, then Galileo, contributing to an ever-increasing body of scientific knowledge, science and religion were, now more than ever before, gathering in separate and opposing camps. Vaughan's conception of the physical universe, like that of many of his contemporaries, was becoming more complex, and gradually the poet fused the claims of science with his faith in God, creating a system of belief that stood more solidly in the face of science's increasing authority. As Marjorie Nicholson explains, the intellectual culture of the seventeenth century underwent a gradual reassessment of traditional values and ideas.

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[2]My discussion of Vaughan's poem "The Law, and the Gospel" (chapter three) provides evidence through interpretive analysis that he was well aware of the typological traditions of explicating the Bible.

> The new mechanistic earth appeared as the result of teachings of Copernicus, Gilbert, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, all of whom, [historians] imply, departed radically from the old superstition of a living earth. . . . We are led to believe that the scientist cast off overnight worn garments of thinking and rose in the morning to don a complete new outfit, leaving old superstition, old religion, old belief to the poets. The change was not so abrupt as that. (125)

This increase in the complexity of what was commonly understood among people of the seventeenth century does not make our understanding of the period's poetry any easier, but by acknowledging the assimilation of science into the religious mindset of the century, we are able to offer a more accurate interpretation of the diverse ideas found in the work of poets like Henry Vaughan.

Having a clear understanding of the universe and the relationship of its parts is essential to Vaughan in his creative endeavours. His conception of the dynamics of the human condition, nature, and God are integral to the focus of his work: the progress of the soul as it strives for illumination and unity with God. This emphasis upon the value of infinite striving is the basis for the Renaissance version of mysticism and thus one of the principal factors leading

to the perception of Vaughan as a mystical poet. True enough then, to breach the rift between God and humanity is a primary theme in Vaughan's poetry, but the process of this crossing is rarely Vaughan's focus; rather, it is the *experience* of the speaker as he grasps various points of illumination that is central.

This focus on experience is reflected in the relationship between Vaughan and his poetic voice; the two are nearly inseparable, making it difficult and, in this author's mind, unnecessary to distinguish one from the other. The poet also believes in the relevance of experience to salvation and the invaluable sensation of every teaching stroke of God's heart-shattering hand. Vaughan's own ordeal, his participation in the civil war, the death of his younger brother, his distaste for some aspects of Puritanism, then becomes even more important to understanding the experience of his speaker and the content of his poetry. Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* is seasoned with personal circumstances and reveals all the astonishment and reverence of a man repeatedly finding traces of his God in the world around him. As a man intently looking for evidence of the divine in his life, Vaughan relies upon the theme of spiritual pilgrimage or the course of a soul in motion towards God; this will serve as a key factor in the later discussion on Vaughan's search for Biblical and natural types.

The shifted focus of his poetry, from secular to religious has often been attributed to a sudden "conversion" brought on by his bout with a serious illness and the death of his younger brother, William. And while these events in Vaughan's life probably did contribute to a renewed enthusiasm in his faith, they cannot wholly account for the common perception that Vaughan was suddenly transformed from a writer of bad secular verses to a poet who wrote religious works of a significantly better quality.[3] Likewise, Vaughan's firm dedication to the Anglican church was unlikely to have been gained overnight, especially when it was competing against the Puritan movement's growing popularity, a religious campaign which was far more effective at claiming sudden, new converts. Kenneth Friedenreich offers similar scepticism. "Vaughan was always an Anglican and a Royalist; the events of his young adulthood must have strengthened his religious and political convictions, but he was not converted to anything from anything" (25). Friedenreich further notes that nowhere in any of Vaughan's autobiographical memoirs is the reputed "conversion" accounted for (24) and Vaughan's preface to the 1655

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[3] Both E.C. Pettet and R.A. Durr offer "conversion" as the reason for the shift in thematic focus and quality from *Olor Iscanus* to *Silex Scintillans,* but their explanations are somewhat confounded by Jonathan Post's suggestion that this theory of "conversion" advantageously minimizes the need to analyse his earlier work (70-72). Post goes to the opposite extreme of the "conversion" claim by suggesting that Vaughan's shift in style was an "irreverent, or at least an ambitious, devotion to poetic fame" (74).

edition of *Silex Scintillans*, plainly recording a debt to "the blessed man, Mr. *George Herbert*, whose holy *life* and *verse* gained many pious *Converts*, (of whom I am the least)," reveals nothing more than the self-deprecating gratitude of an admirer and a poet's defense before his audience. No, it is more probable that Vaughan's transformation is due to the shifting of his poetic focus from secular ideas to an area of specific interest to him--the human soul and its relationship with God.

Vaughan's pilgrimage, or his spiritual experience, is reflected in both the form and content of *Silex Scintillans*. The two volumes are not merely a haphazard collection of poems; they are intentionally arranged to reflect the process of a soul's awakening: a heart in renewal. The emblem at the beginning of the collection tells much about the poems that follow. The stone heart, or "flint" as Vaughan's preface (and title) suggests, is under the transforming power of God's hand. God's power, depicted as lightning, shatters the stone barrier of the heart to reveal the more responsive flesh beneath. This emblem displays a familiar concept to Christian believers: the necessity of the tender heart, sensitive and obedient to the call of God; the emblem's message is fitting since the tender heart is a requisite condition of believers desiring God-implemented changes in their lives. Ira Clark notes the

similarity between Vaughan's emblem and another emblem in an earlier work, Thomas Jenner's *The Soules Solace*.

> Jenner's emblem shows God's hand striking with a hammer (labeled the law) a heart of stone lying on a cushion (the Gospel) displayed on an altar. His verse first explains a natural comparison: to break a flint, place it on a cushion. It then clarifies historical and typological relationships:[4] in order to force David to repent and seek mercy, God placed Nathan underneath David's hard heart. It finally culminates with antitypical and neotypical applications: to be saved humans must repent by softening recalcitrance, obeying God, and recognizing Christ's mercy. (111)

Through each of the volumes of *Silex Scintillans*, the poems beat with a heart's experience of alternating hope and despair, sorrow and joy, reflecting the ordeal of a soul blessed by its experience of God but never, on this plane of existence, achieving the total unity it desires with him. Volume I opens with "Regeneration," a poem of redemption describing the spring-like rejuvenation of a soul burdened by the "frost" and "Clouds" of "sinne." This poem is

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[4] My interest here is in the similarity between Vaughan's emblem and Jenner's; however, the theory of "types" will be discussed later in more detail.

appropriately placed in a collection of poetry that holds the redeeming power of God at its heart. In the poem's third stanza, the speaker, no doubt creating an emblem of the heart of Vaughan, describes the "steps, and falls" of his spiritual pilgrimage: a pilgrimage that parallels the rising and falling form of Vaughan's collection, moving from moments of fear and doubt to instances of optimism and praise. The poem ends, as do most of the poems in *Silex Scintillans*, with the promise and blessing inherent in the speaker's recognition of Christ. Significantly, each poem in the two volumes carries a sense of Christ, whether implicit in the imagery of the verses or by direct reference, and it is this constant anticipation of the Messiah, the personification of God's redemptive power, that acts as the thematic foundation for the entire collection.

The poem that ends volume II, "L'Envoy," is equally appropriate, for it looks to Christ's return, anxiously envisioning a "transparent" state of union between humanity and God as it invokes His presence.

> Arise, arise!
> And like old cloaths fold up these skies,
> This long worn veyl: then shine and spread
> Thy own bright self over each head,
> And through thy creatures pierce and pass

Till all becomes thy cloudless glass,

Transparent as the purest day

And without blemish or decay,

Fixt by thy spirit to a state

For evermore immaculate. (7-16)

Almost benedictory in its last lines, "L'Envoy" is a fitting conclusion to the work,[5] even recalling the opening emblem as the speaker summons God to "write in [believers'] hearts [His] law" (53).

There is no question that, in spite of his fascination with empirical "reality," Vaughan viewed the Bible as the ultimate source of knowledge and truth. He believed that the Bible was indeed the word of God, the voice of the creator of the universe. In fact, the majority of his poems contain characters, images and echoes from the Bible--types or shades, as the seventeenth century would call them. Typology, as has already been mentioned, was a principal form of Bible study in the seventeenth century. Vaughan, like his contemporaries, frequently projected Biblical types onto himself, or his poetic

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[5] The OED describes the phrase "L'envoy" as "the action of sending forth a poem; hence, a dedication, postscript," obviously making it a fitting title to Vaughan's concluding poem. However, the word has several other meanings that make it even more appropriate as the title of Vaughan's end-piece to *Silex Scintillans*. L'envoy can be defined as "the action of dispatching a message or parcel; hence, a mission, errand" and it is also defined as "an agent, commissioner, deputy, messenger, representative."

persona, in order to enrich the significance of his experience. The inclusion of himself as a source for types and the manner in which he relates these types adds a new level of meaning to Vaughan's poetry and one that escapes most commentators. The penultimate poem in the collection, "To the Holy Bible," confirms Vaughan's admiration for the book of God and lists the Bible as his "lifes guide" (1). The Bible, then, is one branch of influence that this paper explores in its analysis of Vaughan's work.

But there is another branch that is both close to the heart of Vaughan and again God-breathed. Nature, or creation, is the second branch of Vaughan's interest. Third to last in the collection is a poem called "The Book," in which the speaker reflects on the contribution of nature to his understanding of God's omnipotent power: hence Vaughan's claim regarding the natural world's ability to make him "wisely weep and look / On [his] own dust" (20-21). Thus, a glance through the table of titles accompanying *Silex Scintillans* shows the majority of poems bearing religious titles, but a significant number of the rest specifically name subjects from the world of nature.

Consequently, although Vaughan's poetry always leads into a spiritual theme, it is the combination of his scriptural and natural observations that are the key to his spiritual illumination.

> In nature [Vaughan] discovered a new world of beauty and aesthetic pleasure, and the peace and solitude necessary for communion with God through nature. . . . In nature he found that sense of peace and contentment which he thought necessary for the healthy growth of his devotional life. (Husain 241-2)

Vaughan saw God as the "maker of all" ("The Book"; line 1) and so he viewed nature as if it comprised a second set of scriptures. His pilgrimage thus led him to study two volumes of God's creative power, the Bible and nature. Louis Martz suggests that Vaughan's method of defining himself and his relationship to God is preceded by the medieval augustinians who conceived of a trio of "books"--the Bible, nature and the self--essential to understanding God.

> Man, enlightened by Biblical revelation, can grasp the Vestiges, the "traces," of God in external nature; and from this knowledge he can then turn inward to find the Image of God within himself. (*The Paradise Within* 18)

The book of nature, however, brings with it another aspect to Vaughan's poetry. Imbedded in so much natural philosophy--he served nearly forty years as a country physician in Breconshire--Vaughan cannot help but assimilate his neo-platonic and hermetic interests into his poetry. Nature, then, a primary subject in the philosophies of Vaughan's interest, acts as the flame from which

his philosophical lamp is lit, and in Vaughan's poetry sparkles the flint of a mystical perception. The combination of Biblical and mystical sources is very natural in Vaughan's poetry; Vaughan's work shines doubly bright with the rich diversity of its images and ideas. The abundance of typological and mystical notions further suggests that in Vaughan's heart and mind the two subjects are inextricably connected. Thus, arising from the pool of influences behind Vaughan's work, the Bible and nature, is his poetic search for the self and a collection of poetry reflecting the experience of a soul thirsting for God.

OPENING THE BOOK OF NATURE:

VAUGHAN'S MYSTICAL INFLUENCES

The natural country-side of Vaughan's home was a perfect backdrop to his meditations upon the relationship between God and His creation; this window of influence, nature, is the one through which he has received the most critical attention. Because Vaughan's sense of the natural world around him was influenced in part by his knowledge of Renaissance philosophy, the appearance of mystical elements in his poetry, as Itrat-Husain confirms, is inherently connected to his perception of the universe.

> Vaughan's conception of nature as the revelation of an aspect of the creative energy of God was influenced by Hermetic Physics, medical astrology and alchemy and to a certain extent by the Platonic conception of Beauty in the sensible world ultimately leading to the supreme Beauty, God. (242)

Vaughan's perception of nature as a pathway to a deeper understanding of his own soul and ultimately a greater intimacy with God is manifested in poems whose subjects come from his natural surroundings: the landscape and creature-scape of his home. Through the comparison of himself with his environment, Vaughan draws elements of the natural world into types of which he, or humanity, is the antitype, or fulfilment. This system of comparison and

typology effectively enables Vaughan to characterize his soul's relationship to God, and provides the starting point for a spiritual pilgrimage that is the basis of Vaughan's poetry.

Throughout *Silex Scintillans* Vaughan communicates his sense of the immanent presence of God in the natural world. This immanence allows Vaughan to use nature as a source of instruction and inspiration in his poetry; yet, it is important to note that the poet's attention to nature as the evidence of divinity is not meant to imply an affiliation with pantheism. Vaughan sees the evidence of God within the natural world but they are two distinct entities.

> [Vaughan] affirms the reality of created nature and enjoys the glorious manifestation of God's spirit in it, but he also realizes that supreme reality is God, and thus enjoys the divine fellowship with Christ. His God is in nature and yet above nature. (Itrat-Husain, 238-239)[6]

In his meditation on the external world, Vaughan is often compelled to search introspectively. Although he frequently describes God's signature shining through various objects of nature, Vaughan's images of immanence reflect an attitude of mysticism, in which he is not only constantly aware of God's

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[6] E.C. Pettet similarly writes: "there is a compact affirmation of the central hermetic doctrine of God's immanence in Nature. . . . God has created Nature and continuously permeates it" (79).

presence, but also continually trying to achieve a direct and intimate state with that presence. In mystical terms, the desired state is beyond mere illumination, at least in the normally accepted sense of that word: it is a point of unity with the Divine Presence.

In "Resurrection and Immortality," for instance, Vaughan uses the metaphor of the silk-worm's transformation to symbolize the change affecting both the body and soul in death. The poem takes the form of a dialogue between the body and the soul, and the body begins by questioning the soul about God's providential care of creation and humanity. A silk-worm, the object of the body's observation, is revived from a figurative death, "that long sleepe" (6), and is now "full with the vitall Ray" (9) of God's "quickning power" (3). The silk-worm's release from its cocoon, a metaphor for the soul's release from the body, reflects the Platonic idea that the body is a hindrance to man's spiritual freedom and fellowship with God; it is a fleshly blanket obstructing the full light of God's glorious being. This is a concept that recurs throughout Vaughan's poetry: the veiling of the insensible, or spiritual, by the sensible, or physical. Overcoming the physical barrier is illustrated in the transformation of the silk-worm as its "drowsie," (5) creeping state becomes a flight "proud with life and sence" (11), a state of vitality and understanding. The

transformation of the silk-worm leaves behind a husk of the old creature, the cocoon, symbolizing the soul's escape from its physical cell.

Vaughan's use of the silk-worm as an example of God's transformational power reflects the general attention of hermeticism to Nature, where God is immanently present within creation. Through the dynamics of the silk-worm's change, Vaughan perceives a similarity in the dynamics of his understanding of the human body's renewal after death. Hence, the silk-worm is a 'type' representing the 'antitype' of the human condition and the "resurrection" of the silk-worm is a reflection of human resurrection, both of which exemplify, in their appropriate degrees, the resurrection of Christ. It is important to note, however, that in true typological form the 'type,' or silk-worm, is only a shadow of its 'antitype,' the human, and the two have significant differences. Vaughan draws his reader to this distinction when the body voices its concern to the soul that its death will be too much like the silk-worm's transformation and not akin to the transformation that affected Christ's body in death.

Shall I then thinke such providence will be
Lesse friend to me?
Or that he can endure to be unjust
Who keeps his Covenant even with our dust?
(15-18)

As line 18 suggests, Christ was God's covenant in earthly flesh, His covenant kept with earthly dust. The body complains that it must think God unjust since He is able to sway from the precedent set by Christ's resurrected body. This prompts the soul's lecture to the body, the "querulous handful" of dust, which includes the revelation that God's immanent spirit preserves and sustains the totality of every one of His human creations until the time when it will be renewed by His power. Thus the body's vision of the silk-worm analogy is incomplete, for while the soul does leave the husk of the body, it will one day be reunited with a new body, reborn of the old, just as the body of Christ was.[7]

In Vaughan's comparisons of human religious experience with nature, his discoveries reflect his conception of God's spirit permeating and revealing its function in the world. This has been described by Joan Bennett--although in more basic terms than the above reading of "Resurrection and Immortality" suggests--as the exercise of a microcosm/macrocosm comparison. Bennett writes: "Vaughan lays stress upon the repetition in the microcosm of the

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[7] His passive Cottage; which (though laid aside,)
Like some spruce Bride,
Shall one day rise, and cloath'd with shining light
All pure, and bright
Re-marry to the soule (49-50).
These lines are quoted again below in the discussion of Vaughan's concern with individuality.

pattern of the macrocosm" (83). This is indeed true, since Vaughan stresses the repetition of patterns within the universe, yet, in light of the typological associations mentioned above, his comprehension of the universe is probably not quite as simple as the process Bennett describes.

As has been mentioned already, Vaughan lived in a time when the world's understanding was maturing. While the distinction between microcosm and macrocosm had served the medieval mind, it was not as suitable to the late Renaissance conception of the universe. Marjorie Nicholson explains the seventeenth century's growing awareness and refinement of knowledge about the corporeal world.

> The Elizabethans used the word macrocosm broadly: it might indicate the whole of things--the universe, including the earth; on occasion it might mean the world or earth, as distinguished from man. However as the Renaissance mind was becoming more aware of earth, thanks to exploration and discovery, and more aware of the universe, thanks to Copernicus and Tycho Brahe, the term macrocosm became more significant and more complex. (Nicholson 27-28)

Nicholson goes on to divide the macrocosm into two units, the universe (which maintains the classification of macrocosm) and the earth (which she reclassifies

as the geocosm). This distinction between the individual, the earth, and the heavens is aptly applied to Vaughan's poetry, enabling the modern reader to understand his perception of the world and universe beyond: a perception that is more intricate than previously recognized by commentators.

Vaughan reads patterns of the human soul in the activity of the entire cosmos, and he sees the separation between Creator and His Creation present there as well. In this sense, then, nature becomes a commiserator with humanity, since both were separated from God by the Fall. But the natural world, which is depicted as vital, and at times sentient, does not share the level of despair experienced by Vaughan's speaker and while all of creation shares the same separation from God incurred by the Fall, the three levels of the universe do not share the same 'distance' of separation in the finite sense. Vaughan's poetry suggests that in his conception of the universe, the three - cosms, micro/geo/macro, exist hierarchically.

Stars, the primary representatives of Vaughan's macrocosm, are the objects of creation that appear to contain the most of God's immanence. Their 'attractive' light is frequently said by Vaughan to serve as a guide for the natural world below, and they (stars) seem partially, if not entirely, to escape

the veils created by a physical existence.[8]

The Pious soul by night
Is like a clouded starre, whose beames though sed
To shed their light
Under some Cloud
Yet are above,
And shine, and move
Beyond that mistie shrowd.
("The Morning-watch" 24-31)

The separation shared by all of creation exists in the universe outside of the world, but the pain of this disparity felt by the stars is apparently less acute than that of the earth's.

I doe survey
Each busie Ray,
And how they work, and wind,
And wish each beame
My soul doth streame,
With the like ardour shin'd;

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[8] Similar depictions of veil-escaping stars are found in "Rules and Lessons," "Midnight," "[Joy of my life . . .]," "The Constellation" and "The Starre."

What Emanations,[9]

Quick vibrations

And bright stirs are there? ("Midnight" 5-13)

These examples confirm the lack of pantheism in Vaughan's conception of the world, for nature, like humanity, still relies upon the grace of God. And so Vaughan believes nature has a similar yet separate existence from humankind; both entities are God's creation, and originally nature was under man's dominion, but for Vaughan the Fall has shifted the order. Itrat-Husain also defends Vaughan against pantheistic claims and points out this element in the poet's characterization of nature: "Nature has its independent life, perhaps more permanent and well ordered than the life of man, but it is equally dependent upon God" (239).

Vaughan's struggle for intimacy with God thus does not appear to be experienced at the same level of intensity by his natural co-habitants, although

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[9] The word "emanation" appears in neoplatonist language. It is a concept describing the overabundance of the "absolute being."

> [B]ecause of the superabundance in it, the absolute overflows, and from this super-abundance it produces the multiformity of the universe, down to formless matter as the extreme limit of non-being (Cassirer 18).

As the emanations of the Absolute Good move farther away from their divine origins and dissipate, they become imperfect. This concept fits nicely within Vaughan's conception of the universe, where the arrangement of creation reflects varying degrees of sinful degradation.

they each share a similar vital existence. This could be attributed to the unique mind of man, a being of sentience who is self-consciously aware of his need for God and desires all the more His presence; however it is still important to note that Vaughan's universe includes a sentient nature, also aware of and desiring God.

> Walk with thy fellow-creatures: note the *hush*
> And *whispers* amongst them. There's not a *spring*,
> Or *leaf* but hath his *morning-hymn*; Each *bush*
> And *oak* doth know *I AM*. ("Rules and Lessons" 13-16)[10]

Vaughan's sentient nature allows him to explore the Renaissance theory of vitalism, a philosophy suggesting that the natural world receives its sentience by a force of divine or supernatural origin, not unlike the "vitall Ray" Vaughan describes in "Resurrection and Immortality." In the first part of that poem, the body perceives God's immanence as a "renewing breath" (1), a rejuvenating spirit that "binds, and loosens death" (2) and fills creation with his life-giving light, that "vitall Ray" (9). Here Vaughan explores the cyclical nature of the natural world, inspired by God's immanent presence.

Louis L. Martz notes the cyclical/rejuvenating emphasis of the poem,

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[10] See also, among others, "The Tempest," "Cock-crowing," "The Bird," "Palm-Sunday," and "The Night."

stating that "The whole of section 2 represents Vaughan's version of the 'Hermetic philosophy' of nature's constant power of renewal" (*Henry Vaughan* 176). But it is important to note that Vaughan does not specifically credit nature for that power of renewal, nor is the cycle of renewal constant: rather, the power has its beginning and end in God. Vaughan credits the renewal of the body (discussed in more detail below) to the immanence of God, "For [His] preserving spirit doth still passe / Untainted through this Masse" (31-32). Through part two of the poem, the soul responds to the body's complaint, citing death as a transformation rather than an end, a "Change of suits"(22) which Vaughan compares to the phoenix, a figure metaphorically central to cycles of renewal as is Christ, who himself proved death a mere renewal or change.

For no thing can to *Nothing* fall, but still
Incorporates by skill,
And then returns, and from the wombe of things
Such treasure brings
As *Phenix*-like renew'th
Both life, and youth; (25-30)

The mystical union between body, soul, and God that Vaughan imagines is not the absorption of a soul into a universal entity; rather each soul

will maintain its individuality through its resurrected and refined body. This reflects one of the primary differences between platonism and Renaissance neoplatonism--the latter's emphasis upon free will.[11] The union Vaughan strives for is a state of intimacy with God that only becomes possible once the sinfulness of the flesh and the world is transcended. Thus the necessity of the body's refinement through death and regeneration; it must be cleansed of its sinful elements. Only then can the body, "with Inlightned Rayes / Pierce all" the mysteries of the universe and rove "both wing'd, and free" in God's Holy, sinless presence. So the body, the soul assures, will not end at death, but merely await its refined reunion with the soul.

Till time no more shall rot
His passive Cottage; which (though laid aside,)
Like some spruce Bride,
Shall one day rise, and cloath'd with shining light
All pure, and bright
Re-marry to the soule, for 'tis most plaine
Thou only fal'st to be refin'd[12] againe. (44-50)

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[11] Renaissance neoplatonists attribute humanity's determination to free will. A man's place in the order of the universe is "not so much a consequence of his nature as a consequence of his free action" (Cassirer 115).

[12] Refining alludes to the hermetic quest of discovering the philosopher's stone, or being able to refine lead into gold. This is also in fact a

By the third and final section of "Resurrection and Immortality," Vaughan has realized a mutual immanence where God is not only shining in him, but he is free to "Rove in that mighty, and eternall light" (63). Vaughan's ideas of immanence throughout the poem are akin to the goal of mysticism, the achievement of a state in which God and man have found direct contact with each other, a state very similar to the eternal day of heaven.[13]

Where no rude shade, or night
Shall dare approach us; we shall there no more
Watch stars, or pore
Through melancholly clouds, and say
Would it were Day!
One everlasting *Saboth* there shall runne
Without *Succesion* and without a *Sunne.* (64-70)

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common Biblical image, for several times in the Old Testament, God promises to refine His people to a purer state.

> But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness (*Malachi* 3:2-3).

For other Biblical references to refining see *Isaiah* 48:10 and *Zechariah* 13:9.

[13] "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (*Revelation* 22:5).

Vaughan's poem, though a dialogue, maps a trail of experience to unity with God and this trail holds what have been recognized as the four significant steps in the "mystic way" to God. Evelyn Underhill explains these four important points on the "mystic path," the road to spiritual unity with the One, as the awakening of the self, purgation of the self, illumination, and union (169-170). In this poem, all of the significant steps of the *via mystica* are presented.

The query of the body to the soul represents the awakening of the self. Aware of the pattern of God in nature, the body seeks to understand its own condition. Purgation comes with death, where the body is purged or "refin'd" as Vaughan describes it, into an illumined state of "shining light." The "Inlighten'd Rayes" of its new existence permit the body to "Pierce all their wayes," all the ways of the universe, and come into a final union with the "eternall light."

With the end of the poem comes also the end of the cycle of renewal. The body's reunion with the soul is met in the "mighty, and eternall" light of God, thus bringing an end to days. The abolishment of the diurnal/nocturnal cycle signifies that the pattern of nature has reached fruition; the cycle of seasons and of life and death is over.

Close readings of Vaughan's poetry make it apparent that his

metaphoric use of the diurnal cycle, as in "Resurrection and Immortality," is largely based upon his understanding of the Bible's metaphoric use of day and night. Scripturally, light is sometimes the symbol of Christ, who is frequently represented by the sun.[14] However, in the poem "Midnight," Vaughan incorporates some of his most creative uses of light imagery reflecting a conception of light that relies upon a combination of philosophical conventions and Biblical standards. Admiring the beauty of the night's light, Vaughan creates a contrast between the "Emanations, / Quick vibrations / And bright stirs" residing in the sky with the "thin Ejections, / Cold Affections, / And slow motions" here on earth (11-16). This suggests the hierarchy of creation as the speaker wishes, while he beholds heaven's "hoast of spyes," the stars, that his soul could "With the like ardour" shine (3-10).

The radiance of the stars is described as a "busy," "working," "winding," "quick" and "stirring" state of vitality. Contrary to the dull motions of earth, the heavens are full of life, quickened by God's immanence. The hierarchical display of God's immanence is a concept characteristic of mysticism. In Yates's

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[14] "In [Christ] was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (*John* 1:4-9).

view, "the notion that the supernal light is reflected down the angelic hierarchies, flashing as in mirrors from one to another, is a characteristically Dionysian conception" (120).[15] This hierarchy leads into the second stanza, where the speaker, realizing his base position, requests the fiery baptism of his spirit suggested by the poem's epigraph.

Come then, my god!
Shine on this bloud
And water in one beame,
And thou shalt see
Kindled by thee
Both liquors burne and streame. (21-26)

Following this spiritual quickening, the poet describes the "bright quicknes, / Active brightnes, / And celestiall flowes" (27-29) that will then be discovered in him.[16]

The stars are not only bright with God's light, they are sentient, alive with his immanence, and busy in their watches as is all of nature in Vaughan's

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[15] Yates is here referring to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite and not the pagan god of wine and revelry.

[16] The transformation described reflects both the alchemical transmutation of metals from lead into gold and the "refin'd" quality described in "Resurrection and Immortality." In Vaughan's case, he desires the transmutation of a lead-like spirit into a golden one.

poetry. Elizabeth Holmes writes,

> [Vaughan] is platonic in his continual conviction of an invisible presence behind or within the visible, and the peculiar presentation in his poetry of a natural world which is entirely sentient, and in contact with the sentient heart, not merely visible to the sensuous eye. (6)[17]

The subject of the natural world's sentience and the revelation of God's light are themes both found in "Cock-crowing." Vaughan uses the poem "Cock-crowing" to extend his desire for union with God. He characterizes God as the world's prime source of light by metaphorically treating Him as the sun throughout the poem. This is a common device for Vaughan, also common to the Bible and neoplatonism, and his combination of the Son of God and the sun of God will be analyzed more fully in the Biblical section below.

The subject of the poem, the crowing cock, awaits the light of the rising sun and provides the speaker with a parallel to the impulse of his own inner being. Throughout the poem, Vaughan affirms his belief that creation is alive with the light of God's immanence. He asks what "Sunnie seed" (1) and "Glance of day" (2) the "Father of lights" (1) has "confin'd / Into this bird" (3-

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[17] The contact of the senses and sentient objects of creation is a topic that is also prevalent in Vaughan's work. This "sympathetic" relationship will be discussed in more detail below.

4). He is drawn specifically to the "busie Ray" (4) assigned to the bird.

> Their little grain expelling night
>
> So shines and sings, as if it knew
>
> The path unto the house of light.
>
> It seems their candle, howe'r done,
>
> Was tinn'd and lighted at the sunne. (9-12)

For the poet, the evidence of God's immanence revealed in creation proves Him to be the world's source of life. Vaughan then relies upon the example of the crowing cock to find encouragement for his own need of spiritual contact with the "immortall light and heat" (19), for just as the bird holds the light of God, so is the speaker lit with the immanence of God, "Whose hand so shines through all this frame" (20). Then, in another mystical turn, as in "Resurrection and Immortality," the immanence of God becomes a mutual immanence with the human spirit. "Seeing thy seed abides in me, / Dwell thou in it, and I in thee" (23-24). As God's light shines in the speaker, so the speaker resides in the light of God. The image of the seed reflects, again, Vaughan's adherence to mystical concepts.

The seed signifies the existence of a larger reality, one as yet undisclosed to the bearer of the seed. This concept is fundamental to the mystic desire to transcend the corporeal realm into spiritual union with God, who represents

that larger reality, the vision of truth desired by all travellers on the mystic path. The seed is also significant because it, being planted inside the the bearer, forces one to look inwardly for illumination: a process signalling another staple of mysticism. Once more, the example of the cock provides encouragement for the searching speaker, who finds his own anticipation of God's bright arrival parallelled in the cock's attending the sunrise.

> But brush me with thy light, that I
> May shine unto a perfect day,
> And warme me at thy glorious Eye! (44-46)

Vaughan frequently closes his poems with the desire for God's Holy touch, a "brushing" of His light that will lift the speaker out of his earthly state of sinful isolation and into a righteousness close to God. Many of the poems found in *Silex Scintillans* depict this desire in conflict with the natural state of human existence. The world and all of its members are sinful by nature (because of the fall of humanity) and naturally in conflict with any desire for sinlessness. Yet through God's tincture, that "so firm a longing can impower" (14), each member hopes for and anxiously awaits the return of Christ who draws him into union with God.

In "Distraction," the conflict between the desire for God's Holiness and the desires of sinfulness becomes more intensely recognized and explored. The

speaker laments the temptations of the world which hinder his relationship with God, blocking the full manifestation of God's presence within him. This presence is apparent in images of light which Vaughan uses in contrast to the noises of the world. Through the senses of sight and hearing, light and noise, he creates a distinction between God and the world. The noisiness of the world becomes more tempting than the shine of God's presence and easily distracts humanity which is "call'd and hurl'd / By each" voice heard (12-13). Here Vaughan illustrates his version of the desire of Christian mysticism for seclusion, a state of self-denial and self-abnegation where nothing but God's presence and influence is felt. Itrat-Husain explains the theoretical background for this mystical desire for isolation, using Plotinus' words to identify the advantages of such a state.

> Just as someone waiting to hear a voice that he loves should separate himself from other voices and prepare his ear for the hearing of the more excellent sound when it comes near; so here it is necessary to neglect sensible sounds, so far as we can keep the Soul's powers of attention pure and ready for the reception of Supernatural Sounds. (28-29)

True to the above paradigm, this desire first prompts the poet to grieve that God has made him as he is, for the brightness of God's light shining within

other objects of nature seems unaffected by the noisy lure of the world.

Hadst thou

Made me a starre, a pearle, or a rain-bow,

The beames I then had shot

My light had lessend not. (5-8)

Again, Vaughan incorporates the platonic idea of the human body acting as a barrier to perfect fellowship with God, but this time he uses the concept to reverse conventional ideas of life and death, making the death of the body bring life to the soul. For Vaughan, the body's natural, contaminated state (not yet refined through death) represents a carcass for the soul; he likens it to a casket, an enclosure that causes him to long for the death of the physical self so that his soul may be released into life. He mourns that he has been "Coffin'd in / This quicken'd masse of sinne" (17-18) that shades him from the light of God and concludes the poem with another plea for physical death, the precursor to physical refinement.

I grieve?

O, yes! thou know'st I doe; Come, and releive

And tame, and keepe downe with thy light

Dust that would rise, and dimme my sight. (27-30)[18]

This struggle between flesh and spirit appears repeatedly throughout Vaughan's poetry, each time signifying a result of the body's veiling man's "sence" of God. Often in Vaughan's poetry, the source of conflict is manifest in the sense of sight, sight which for the speaker is affected by the earth's cloudy atmosphere, permitting only dark reflections to be perceived. In "Resurrection and Immortality," the passing "mists, and shadows" whose "weake *Shine*" represent God's immanence are insufficient for satisfying the speaker's desire to transcend his earthly barrier and commune with God. In keeping with Vaughan's combination of Biblical and mystical influences, his speaker's complaint of seeing only "darkly in a glass" (51) is a direct reference to *1 Corinthians* 13:12. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Only through the "Inlightned Rayes" of God's transformational power will the speaker be able to "Pierce all their wayes" and come to "know" as he is known. Again, he longs for the paradox of dying to be reborn, that "long sleepe" which

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[18] Noel Thomas provides an explanation of Vaughan's use of the word 'dust': "'Dust' is mere dross, the perpetual sign that man is nothing without God. It is, in fact, a clever combination of meanings. The Lord God 'formed man of the dust of the ground' (Genesis 2:7); but 'dust' signifies also the end of man . . . 'dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return' (Genesis 3:19). To this Vaughan adds his own gloss, that 'dust' is the sin of man" (Thomas 140-141).

will open his eyes. Free of the old body, he will no longer rely upon the weak emanations from stars but will be able to see clearly, to transcend this dim world and to rest in the light of God's unveiled fellowship, "Where no rude shade, or night / Shall dare approach [him]" (64-65).

While this sense of conflict between the body and the soul is common to Vaughan's poetry, so too is the solution to the conflict between these elements. In Vaughan's poetry, we find the answer to this battle is the death of the body,[19] the refinement of the physical self and its reunion to the soul in a perfected state with God. Despite his dislike for the perpetual struggle between his spiritual desires and their physical veil, Vaughan sees them both as the necessary elements of his individuality. Sacrificing the speaker's knowledge of and desire for God's presence successfully eliminates the conflict of his desires, but it also eliminates the possibility of choice. Thus Vaughan is not a mystical poet in the traditional sense, for he does not believe absolute unity with God can be achieved in this life. He does believe that an individual can

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[19] When writing about death, Vaughan seems to favour the sleep-death metaphor. James Simmonds writes that the "figurative association of sleep and death is an archetypal or primitive metaphor" (165). However, Vaughan's use of this figure is more elaborate than the archetypal form. Simmonds goes on to provide a history of the sleep-death image and an analysis of Vaughan's use of the figure in chapter VII. Aside from the association between the darkness of sleep and the darkness of death, as well as similarities found between the bed and the grave, Simmonds shows how Vaughan ultimately views awakening from sleep as a type of resurrection.

draw closer to God, but in this state of existence he is held in what may be called a mathematical analogy, an asymptotic relationship. That is to say that humanity, the finite, can draw infinitely closer to God, the infinite, but the two will never achieve direct unity until humanity transcends its sinful (i.e., finite) barrier, an action made possible only through Christ.[20] This then is the single most troublesome fact in the crisis of Vaughan's experience--the infinitude of the distance between himself and God--and it is why so many of his poems are concluded with a plea for God's immediate "brush" or touch.

This longing for death reflects an essential step towards unity with God on the path of the Mystic Way. Evelyn Underhill describes one of the last steps of purgation before reaching union in the spiritual pilgrimage.

> The final and complete purification of the Self . . . is called by some contemplatives the "mystic pain" or "mystic death." . . . The

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[20] The term "asymptote" is defined as "a line which continually approaches a given curve, but does not meet it within a finite distance" (OED). In this analogy God is represented by the straight line, hanging above the arc of the striving human. This arc draws ever nearer to the line above it, but because of it's asymptotic condition it will never meet that line, except in infinity. This reflects the state of Vaughan's speaker because he is aware of the infinite distance between himself and God. He realizes that no matter how long and far he reaches, he can never draw into unity with God by his own means. This is where Christ becomes necessary as a bridge between the finite and the infinite, a link drawing humanity into union with God. In the use of this mathmatical analogy to illustrate a spiritual concept I am following the practice of Nicholas Cusanus, an influential voice in neoplatonic thinking since the fifteenth century.

> consciousness which had, in Illumination, sunned itself in the sense of the Divine Presence, now suffers under an equally intense sense of the Divine Absence. . . . This is the "spiritual crucifixion" so often described by the mystics: the great desolation in which the soul seems abandoned by the Divine. The self now surrenders itself, its individuality, and its will, completely. It desires nothing, asks nothing, is utterly passive, and is thus prepared for union. (169-170)

Vaughan's implicit longing for unity with God brings his speaker to something very similar to "mystic death" and is evident through many of the poems in *Silex Scintillans*. Yet while Vaughan's speaker repeatedly longs to be swallowed up in God's "deep, but dazling darkness" where he might surrender himself to God's provision and care, he does not desire a sacrifice of his individuality, nor a sacrifice of his will, as is required of the "mystic death." In fact, Vaughan believes that God intends for him to maintain a sense of himself. For in light of the world's distractions,

> [H]adst thou [God] clipt my wings, when Coffin'd in
> This quicken'd masse of sinne,
> And saved that light, which freely thou
> Didst then bestow,

I feare

I should have spurn'd, and said thou didst forbeare;[21]

Or that thy store was lesse. ("Distraction" 17-23)

Vaughan believes that the "light" God bestows is not only a sense of and desire for God, but the provision of free will. Without "that light" the conflict roused by the world's distractions would be absent, but at the cost of the freedom to seek God. For God to withhold His light would cause Vaughan's speaker to accuse his maker of shunning him and causing him to declare God's glory to be less than perfect. Thus, God's light, the furniture of free will, is placed within the physical veil of humanity's existence. This seems to be a necessary departure from the concept of the "mystic death," which calls for the abolishment of humanity's individuality and will in a surrender to God's being. Vaughan's version of the "mystic death," however, is prefaced by an intentional attunement of his will to God's by controlling the temptation and distraction of his sinful physical body. This state of distraction is implicitly mentioned in the poem "Cock-crowing."

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[21] The OED lists several possible meanings for the word "forbear." One such is the act of abstaining/withholding and another is to part with or to shun. These are the most likely meanings Vaughan has implied by his use of the word here.

This veyle, I say, is all the cloke

And cloud which shadows thee from me.

This veyle thy full-ey'd love denies,

And onely gleams and fractions spies. (39-42)

This poem concludes with the familiar plea for God to remove the veil, "O take it off! make no delay" (43). The unveiling the poet cries out for signifies a physical death, a death which he fearlessly confronts as the doorway into unity with God. Vaughan implements the 'veil' image again in the poems "Vanity of Spirit," "The Night," "The Feast," and "L'Envoy." In each of these poems, the image of the veil signifies the physical barrier separating the speaker from God and emphasizes the struggle of the speaker, whose feelings of separation anxiety are based on the hindered perception of God's presence. This could be viewed as evidence of the Divine Absence, the intense feeling of Divine abandonment, or it could reflect the speaker's desire for that "mystic death" which precedes the union with God. Either way, this struggle continually provides the basic theme in much of Vaughan's work.

Understanding that the loss of his desire for God would mean a loss of the ability to seek God, Vaughan recognizes also the importance of his knowledge and sense of God, his portion of God's light. In fact, Vaughan conceives of a world in which all of its members bear an inherent sense of God,

a manifestation of His immanence. Vaughan believes that not only is God immanent in His creation, but that this presence sympathetically binds creation together. Many of the poems in *Silex Scintillans* suggest an inherent attraction of the soul to God, evident through God's immanent light which couples all of creation to Him. E.C. Pettet comments as follows: "another central hermetic concept that Vaughan continually reflects in *Silex Scintillans* is that of an active relationship of 'sympathy' or 'magnetism' binding together all parts of the creation" (81). Vaughan manifests this magnetism most often in an attraction to objects of light. Acting contrary to the barrier caused by the body and its earthly existence, this natural magnetism unfortunately contributes to the anguish felt in apprehending the disparity between God and humanity by intensifying the frustration of the speaker's struggle.

The poem "The Starre" typifies the sympathetic/magnetic relationship Vaughan evokes in his poetry. As the title suggests, the poem is a meditation upon a star and the opening stanza implements his concept of magnetism, granting the star a keenly feminine sentience as it displays a flirtatious attraction for the earth below:

> What ever 'tis, whose beauty here below
>
> Attracts thee thus & and makes thee stream & flow,

And wind and curle, and wink and smile,

Shifting thy gate and guile. (1-4)

Here, Vaughan's imagery draws forth the concept of Eros that is so important to the mystical mind. The medieval mystic's conception of love is reflected in Vaughan's image of the flirtatious star and the magnetic bond of all creation. Ernst Cassirer describes the medieval conception of Eros in *The Individual and the Cosmos In Renaissance Philosophy*.

> [Love] overflows to all creatures, to the animals and plants, to the sun and the moon, to the elements and the natural forces. No longer mere 'parts' of being, independent and isolated, they are now fused by the glow of mystical love to a unity with man and with God. (52)

Love, or love for God, is certainly the unifying element in Vaughan's conception of the universe, especially considering his Christian heritage, which would lead him to perceive God as love personified and any demonstration or feeling of love as evidence of God's immanence.[22] Perceiving "all things that subsist and be, / Have their Commissions from Divinitie" (9-10), Vaughan looks to the star as an instrument of instruction, illustrating his conception of

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[22] "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (*1 John* 4:8-16).

the hierarchy of the universe. Examining the subject of the star's sympathy, himself, he finds a bond with the star in his unquenchable desire for the light it sheds,[23] "a restless, pure desire / And longing for thy bright and vitall fire" (17-18). The speaker recognizes that the sympathy shared between himself and the star finds its nucleus in the life-giving love of God, the "vitall fire" that sustains and animates all of His creation, for "bodies once infected, / Deprav'd or dead, can have with [each other] / No hold, nor sympathie" (14-16). Here Vaughan realizes that sin has not overwhelmed him so much as to eliminate all sense of God's presence; rather, he recognizes that God is likewise reaching out to His creation as it looks to Him, in this case through the star. Vaughan depicts the mutual desire for God's celestial presence in the form of a seed. He uses the image of the seed to demonstrate God's immanence again, for the seed implies a flower or plant of origin, pointing to the spirit of God present in the heart of His creation. Thus, Vaughan sees all of creation bound together by the simple seed of the knowledge of God, for where "desire, celestiall, pure desire / Hath taken root, and grows, and doth not tire, / There God a Commerce states" (25-27).

The attraction between the star and speaker illustrates Vaughan's

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[23] The bright and vital fire of the star match the vital rays of God's immanence described in the poem "Cock-crowing" above.

conception of a three-tiered universe, for the star sheds light upon the speaker's understanding of God. Thus the macrocosm, of which the star is a resident, shares its knowledge of God, a fuller knowledge due to its closer proximity, with the microcosm. Vaughan uses the seed image in "Cock-crowing," again as a metaphor of God's immanence, to further develop the concept of magnetism. In "Cock-crowing," Vaughan envisions the cock imbued with a "Sunnie seed" (1), or "glance of day" (2), magnetically attracting it to the sun and compelling it to await each sunrise and greet the morning's first ray of sunlight. This attraction is reflected in the poet's own impulse to wait and "watch for [God's] appearing hour" (16), the rising of the first and grandest sun.

These seeds of origin, or hints of a binding, magnetic immanence, allow Vaughan to explore the idea of pre-existence. Vaughan's vision of pre-existence is rooted in his ideas of immanence, the veil of earthly existence and the sympathetic bonds between members of God's creation. The most prominent metaphysical idea in "The Retreate" is his conception of the pre-existence of the human soul.[24] In this poem Vaughan refers to his life on earth

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[24] Thomas Traherne, a contemporary of Vaughan, expressed similar notions on the pre-existence of the soul. In Traherne's "Shadows in the Water," he offers lines very close to Vaughan's "The Retreate."

> In unexperienc'd Infancy
> Many a sweet Mistake doth ly:
> Mistake tho false, intending tru;
> A *Seeming* somwhat more than *View*;

as his second existence, one "[a]ppointed for my second race" (4) and suggests that maturation is a process which draws the soul increasingly farther from its "first love" (8), God, and its earlier enlightened existence with him. Noel Thomas writes:

> The first impressive feature of the poem is that Vaughan has sharpened the distinction which he has already implied in earlier poems, between the instinctive or intuitive life of the young soul and the world of rational understanding and intellect which he had learned as innocence receded. (66)

Vaughan creates a vision of childhood memory that consists of light and shadows, knowledge and mystery. During childhood the soul shines in "Angell-infancy" (2) and easily recalls the "white, Celestiall thought" (6) of its earlier existence. To Vaughan, the earthly radiation of God's immanence is more obvious to a child and in the radiance of "those weaker glories" (13) the child spies "Some shadows of eternity" (14) or shades of the better place it so recently has left behind.

Vaughan believes that while on earth the body experiences God's

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> That doth instruct the Mind
> In Things that ly behind,
> And many Secrets to us show
> Which afterwards we com to know (1-8).

immanence as it is imbued with "bright *shootes* of everlastingnesse" (20), but the fleshly veil darkens what was once an "Inlightned spirit" (25), and acts as an opaque reminder of the "glorious traine" (24) it once wore. The soul's habitation on earth not only increases its distance from God, but leads into the blackness of sin, further dimming God's bright immanence. The dimming of God's securing immanence is best described by Noel Thomas: "the unnatural misery of man who declines as he grows . . . underlines the truth that by so-called growth man has lost the capacity of instinctive response to his Creator, which he had only when young" (88).

In this poem Vaughan conceives of Sin as the "black art" (17) and he emphasizes the sinner's separation from God's presence with the words "sev'rall sinne," implying sin's severing effect, able to separate humanity from God. Again, Vaughan asserts the hindrance caused by the distractions of the flesh, and while some of humanity looks toward a bright future of better days, Vaughan looks back to the dimming memory of the past, to the point where he felt closest to God's presence and least under the influence of the world's "black art."

> Some men a forward motion love,
>
> But I by backward steps would move

And when this dust falls to the urn

In that state I came return. (29-32)

In "The Water-fall" Vaughan extends his ideas of life, death and pre-existence into the metaphor of water. In this poem, Vaughan uses water to represent human lives flowing inevitably toward death, represented by the waterfall.

All must descend

Not to an end:

But quickned by this deep and rocky grave,

Rise to a longer course more bright and brave. (9-12)

The waterfall's descending drops represent the passing of individuals from their tumultuous, earthly existence into the calm sea of God's presence and a renewed state of being. However, as in "Resurrection and Immortality," the speaker's fear of death becomes an issue that must be overcome: "[H]is liquid, loose retinue stayed / Lingering, and were of this steep place afraid" (5-6). This time the speaker answers his own anxieties and dissolves the mystery of death's shadows in an ocean of bright hope.

Should poor souls fear a shade or night,

Who came (sure) from a sea of light?

Or since those drops are all sent back

So sure to thee, that none doth lack,

Why should frail flesh doubt any more

That what God takes, hee'l not restore? (17-22)

As in "Resurrection and Immortality," the passing of the body, like that of water, is not merely a forward journey but a return, for the drops of water are ultimately "sent back" (19) to their source through the process of evaporation/condensation. And just as the soul is reunited with God, so is the "frail flesh" restored and reunited with the soul. Here Vaughan extends the ideas begun in earlier poems such as "Resurrection and Immortality" and "The Retreate," for not only are the body and soul reunited after death, they are reunited with their originator, God. Death, then, is requisite in Vaughan's transcendance into Divine union, for only upon the waves forced by the crashing falls, symbolising death, can an individual "reach by course the bank" of heaven. Vaughan uses the cycle of water, which undergoes a perpetual process of evaporation and condensation, to reflect the relationship between God and humanity as well as to depict the process of an individual's journey from pre-existence to an earthly existence and finally back to a renewed existence with God.[25]

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[25] This process of evaporation and condensation appears again in "Isaac's Marriage," a poem discussed in the section on Biblical influence.

Vaughan's attention to nature reflects several mystical influences. His conception of the natural world, while arising out of his knowledge and contact with renaissance philosophies, is harboured in what he would no doubt call an utterly Christian book of poetry. Vaughan combines his mystical nature with his Anglican heritage to create poems of complexity and rich significance. *Silex Scintillans* holds true to the metaphysical principle that things apparently unrelated do parallel one another and thus it is not only in praise of the waterfall but also in all of God's creation that Vaughan proclaims

> What sublime truths, and wholesome themes,
>
> Lodge in thy mystical, deep streams! (27-28)

"IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD": VAUGHAN'S USE OF THE BIBLE

Vaughan's second window of influence is the Bible, and his interest in the Holy scriptures is implicit throughout *Silex Scintillans*. As mentioned earlier, the image of Christ is central to Vaughan's poetry. Through Biblical allusion and echoes, quotation, and typology, Vaughan stresses the centrality of Christ to his conception of the universe and the condition of his soul.

In "The Night" he reverses the traditional roles of light and darkness, contrasting them against even his own applications in previous poetry. The traditional role of light can be found in the poem "Cock-Crowing," where Vaughan describes the desire of all "breeds" as "dreams of Paradise and light" (6). He later cries out in the same poem for God to "brush [him] with Thy light, that [he] / May shine unto a perfect day" (44-45) and join with God in His brilliant glory. But Vaughan uses "The Night" to reverse the contrast between light and darkness. He shakes off the benevolent character of day-light, describing the day-time as "this worlds ill-guiding light" where man does more wrong than he can by night (47-48). At the poem's conclusion, where, in other thematically similar works he often pleads for a "brushing" of God's light, he wishes instead to become a part of God's "deep, but dazling darkness" where he might "live invisible and dim" (49-54). The quality of God's

darkness, the infinite mystery of His being, becomes the place where Vaughan's speaker would reside; it is not the place where he is able bask in God's warm, illuminating love, but a residence taken in the unknown part of God, a place in which men and women "[s]ee not all clear."

Yet God's darkness holds a sense of security for the speaker for it is a union with God where the speaker can live without the threat of sin, through Christ who causes the sins of humanity to disappear. However, Vaughan's speaker does not desire an absorption of the self, a disintegration of his being into the heart of God; rather, he wishes to abide with God in His dimness so that he will no longer be susceptible to the temptations and distractions of the physical world but be filled with the "[c]alm and unhaunted" peacefulness of God's "dark tent." Vaughan's treatment of darkness in this poem causes the night to lose its usual metaphoric association with sinfulness and reveals qualities of the night that are more commonly associated with the traditional characteristics of God, day, and light. Although Vaughan has reversed the metaphors associated with these traditional characteristics, "The Night" is a faithful contribution to *Silex Scintillans*, for Vaughan continues to find the character and evidence of God in all aspects of the universe, including Christ who sits in creation's midst.

Vaughan places Christ in the centre of the poem's metaphors and he opens "The Night" with a description of Christ's role in salvation. Christ assumes the image of the veil, which no longer represents a hindrance to humanity's perception of God, but a protective shade, shielding humankind from the devouring fire of God's "glorious noon." Christ came to solve the dilemma of sin meeting holiness; he took human form so "[t]hat men might look and live, as Glo-worms shine, / And face the Moon" (3-4), so that humanity could meet divinity without being consumed by God's overwhelming glory. Both glow-worms and the moon are images that correspond to the night and Vaughan uses these images to suggest that the night is an integral aspect of God's character and a necessary part of salvation. Vaughan understands that the light of glow-worms is easiest to see in the dark, and he uses them as a metaphoric companion to the meeting of Christ and Nicodemus, where the light of God is seen by Nicodemus in the middle of the night rather than by day. Likewise, though men cannot stare directly at the light of the sun, they can see it reflected on the moon, just as men can only know God through His reflection in Christ.

> [M]an can not witness the sun directly, for as the direct light of the sun would quench the glowworm's feeble and inconstant flicker, so would the direct and noonday revelation of Divinity

> extinguish man's slight and intermittent light; but he may gaze unharmed on the Light reflected, as it were, from the moon. (Durr 115)

Here Christ is depicted not only as the reflection of God's light, who makes intimacy with divinity possible, but also as the preserver of the individuality of souls within that union, for by gazing upon Christ a soul may see God's light without finding its own extinguished in God's incredible luminosity. In this poem Christ, traditionally associated with the sun, is linked to the moon and his character of light becomes surrounded by darkness with the power to shade rather than illuminate. The reversal of light and darkness forms an interesting paradox, for traditionally Christ is the Light that is the bringer of light unto humanity.[26] Through the variety of images Vaughan employs in his depiction of the Messiah, he asserts the Bible's emphasis on the importance of Christ in one's knowing God, and he establishes an atmosphere of salvation in the darkness of night when he describes how "[w]ise *Nicodemus* saw such light / As made him know his God by night" (5-6).

Vaughan's simile of men as "Glo-worms" (3) is an opposition of ideas that finds Christ at its heart, for it combines the weakness and baseness of an

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[26] "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (*John* 8:12).

earthly existence (worms) with the powerful radiance of the heavens (glowing light). Thus, the image of the glow-worm is not only symbolic of Christ, who was divinity harboured in an earthly body, but it also represents the mortal individual, who can have the light of God shining within him through Christ. The image is echoed Biblically in *2 Corinthians* 4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Christ is the central allusion again in line nine where Vaughan describes Nicodemus' observation of the sun rising with "long expected healing wings."[27] Christ's times of solitary devotion are described in an allusion to a lone flower, redolent of the flowers of the love songs of the *Song of Songs*.[28] Another allusion appears in the fourth stanza which creates a contrast between the Old Testament and New Testament habitations of God.

> No mercy-seat of gold,
> No dead and dusty *Cherub*, nor carv'd stone,
> But his own living works did my Lord hold
> And lodge alone; (19-22)

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[27] This line relies upon the mixed metaphor found in *Malachi* 4:2. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

[28] "I *am* the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys" (*Song of Songs* 2:1).

The first is a reference to the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle, the holy abiding place of the spirit of God.

> And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold. . . .And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. . . .And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. (*Exodus* 25:17-22)

However, with the arrival of the new covenant through Christ, God's abiding place is no longer the cold, "dead" seat of "carv'd stone" but the seat of his creation,[29] "his living works." Vaughan creates a relationship between Christ and a sentient natural world that surrounds his prayer time. "Where *trees* and *herbs* did watch and peep / And wonder, while the *Jews* did sleep" (23-24). The element of a sentient creation, described in the previous chapter, is not solely

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[29] "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (*Hebrews* 8:10).

based on Vaughan's hermetical knowledge but is rooted in the Bible as well, for a similar relationship between nature and Christ appears in the gospel of Luke when Christ warns the Pharisees that if his disciples did not open their mouths to praise him, then even the stones would cry out.[30]

By the fifth stanza, Vaughan has developed the image of Christ within the atmosphere of the night so effectively that the two have become synonymous. The night is no longer a period of time; it is a personality, "this world's defeat, / The stop to busy fools; Care's check and curb" (25-26), and the character the night most resembles is that of God.

> God's silent, searching flight:
> When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all
> His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
> His still, soft call;
> His knocking time; The souls dumb watch,
> When Spirits their fair kinred catch. (31-36)

The sixth stanza may seem to be nothing more than a loose collection of night-time images alluding to God and to Christ, but Vaughan's intention is to draw the characters of God, Christ and the night into a more profound relationship. The first line of the sixth stanza alludes to God's first flight recorded in *Genesis*

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[30] *Luke* 19:37-40.

1, a flight through the darkness of night: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (verse 2). The significance of this allusion not only points to the fact that God created the first night by the power of His word (*Genesis* 1:3-5) but that the Word of God, as *John* 1:1-18 relates, is none other than Christ, who was also present "in the beginning." Similarly, lines 32 and 33 are found almost identically in *Song of Songs* 5:2.

> I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Vaughan's use of this verse is effective on a number of levels. First of all, it emphasizes the primary theme of the poem: Christ's active night-times and the reconciliation he creates between God and humanity. On the other hand, the poem presents a perspective of Christ that is hardly typical. Christ's miracles were performed during the day and before many people, but the emphasis of the poem is upon a power more subtly represented, a silent power, no weaker than the power manifest in the daytime, but committed to the night. The verse also reflects the attitude of one desiring entrance into a house, just as it was God's desire to enter into the hearts and minds of men. Finally, the verse

alludes to the night-time visit between Christ and Nicodemus, the typological basis of the poem.

Line 34 offers a deeper delving into God's subtle power through an allusion to the meeting between Elijah and God in *I Kings* 19:1-18. Prefiguring Vaughan's theme, Elijah does not find God, the almighty, in a string of violent acts of nature but in a "still, small voice" (verses 11-12). Following the Biblical model, Vaughan places God in the calm after the storm, in the serene night following the speaker's "loud, evil days" (37). Typologically, the "still, small voice" represents Christ, whose earthly existence was a whispered demonstration of God's divine power, an unexpected knock at the door of humanity.[31]

In addition to the Biblical allusions and resonances found in the poem, there are three direct references to Biblical passages: all detailing events of the night. The first occurs before the poem's first line where Vaughan cites *John* 3:2, establishing the typological pattern of the poem in the story of Nicodemus' encounter with Christ at night. The other two are cited by Vaughan in a footnote to line 29, "Christs progress, and his prayer time," as

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[31] The image of Christ's "knocking time" (35) alludes again to *Song of Songs* 5:2 as well as to *Revelation* 3:20 which reads, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Mark 1:35 and *Luke* 21:37. Each of these verses is a reference to Christ's habit of spending the night alone in prayer. These scripture references are suitably connected to Vaughan's thematic subjects, Christ and the night, for they reveal Christ's progress to be a pilgrimage towards solitude on the cross and towards death: a journey towards the night. By the poem's conclusion, when Vaughan's speaker pleads for an entrance into God's night, the reader understands that the night of God is no different than the light of God, and they both are represented by one person--Christ. Thus, when Vaughan longs to live "in him . . . invisible and dim" (53-54) it is a longing for the provision of Christ--the forgiveness of sins.

Another type of pilgrimage, a quest for redemption and cleansing on behalf of the speaker, is described in the poem "Regeneration." His journey is made evident by his "Pilgrims Eye" (13) and is characterized by a pattern of ascents and descents between happiness and discontent. Vaughan begins the poem by contrasting the seasons of nature with the changing seasons of the subject's emotions.

> It was high-spring, and all the way
>
> *Primros'd*, and hung with shade;
>
> Yet, was it frost within,
>
> And surly winds

Blasted my infant buds, and sinne

Like Clouds ecclips'd my mind. (1-8)

The poem then draws the speaker's experience into a typological comparison with the journey of Jacob in the book of *Genesis*. The vision experienced by Jacob is very different from the vision Vaughan's subject has, but each dream provides its witness with hope, and bears the promise of regeneration. Vaughan's vision is of a "grove descryed / Of stately height, whose branches met / And mixt on every side" (34-36), and the regeneration he discovers is like the coming of "a new spring" (39).

The edenic description of the garden that Vaughan provides is not merely a portrait of regenerating seasons moving from winter's misery to spring's youthful exuberance. Vaughan's garden embodies the characteristics of the one whom he suggests is the true source of his regeneration--Christ. Typology, in its most basic sense, is the anticipation of Christ through Old Testament scripture. In "Regeneration," Vaughan adapts the Old Testament Jacob to his seventeenth-century subject in a typological fashion, and yet for some reason the criticism of this poem overlooks the true typological emphasis begun by that Biblical reference.[32] Like Jacob, whose promise-filled vision from

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[32] Noel Thomas suggests that the grove is a combination of the Welsh country-side of Vaughan's home and the Biblical landscape he imagined (106). E.C. Pettet suggests that the garden represents the "new spring" brought on by

God points to the arrival of Christ on earth, the speaker's journey directs him to the redemption offered by the Biblical saviour.[33] The new spring that greets the speaker is Christ and the sunny garden Vaughan describes is not merely a type of Eden or Canaan, but representative of Christ again.

> The unthrift Sunne shot vitall gold
>
> A thousand peeces,
>
> And heaven its azure did unfold
>
> Checquer'd with snowie fleeces,
>
> The aire was all in spice
>
> And every bush
>
> A garland wore; Thus fed my Eyes
>
> But all the Eare lay hush. (41-48)

Each line of the poem's sixth stanza uses imagery to describe a vision of the

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the speaker's illumination and the revelation of the beauty of a religious life (112). R.A. Durr identifies some of the garden's elements as characteristic of the presence of Divinity, but he describes the garden more as the seat of Christ in the heart of the speaker rather than indicative of Christ himself (89).

[33] Jacob's dream, described in *Genesis* 28:12 finds an interesting companion in the words of Christ from *John* 1:51.

> And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28:12).
>
> And he saith unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (*John* 1:51).

The words of Christ suggest that the ladder of Jacob's dream is indeed himself.

garden that conspicuously points to the image of Christ in the Bible. First, it is not uncommon to find gold used to characterize Christ. *Song of Songs* repeatedly describes the beloved, frequently interpreted to be Christ, as golden.

> His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (*Song of Songs* 5:11-16)[34]

Second, like Vaughan's sweetly scented garden air, the sweet smell of Christ, the beloved, is drawn from his own garden. "My beloved is gone down

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[34] Most interpretations of *Song of Songs* by Vaughan's time viewed the book as an allegory describing the church's love for Christ. In one such exposition, written in 1585, the author, Thomas Wilcox, comments on the significance of the lily in chapter 5:

> Neither is this flowre only beautifull, but of a pleasant smell, and of good and tall growth, al which tendeth still to the expressing of the glory and beauty of Christ, and to the sweet and pleasant smelles, that are to bee founde in him (140).

into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (*Song of Songs* 6:2). Vaughan also describes heaven unfolding its azure, checked with snowy fleeces. This combination of the Biblical colours of royalty[35] and the opening sky points to Christ again, for it was Christ, the King of kings[36] who watched the heavens open above him after his baptism.

> And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him. (*Mark* 1:9-10)

The snowy fleeces combine with the stanza's last line to suggest the image of Christ as a silent, sacrificial lamb. Throughout the New Testament, Christ is called the Lamb of God (*John* 1:29 & 36), a role anticipated for him by the dozens of times a sacrificial lamb is mentioned in the Old Testament. One such reference is specifically suitable, for it arrives out of the prophecy of Isaiah.

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[35] "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad" (*Esther* 8:15).

[36] "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (*I Timothy* 6:14-15).

> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (*Isaiah* 53:7)

The implication of Christ's death on the cross is supported even further by the garland-bearing bushes in the poem, for Christ too bore a garland, sprung from a bush of thorns.

The fountain that occurs in stanza seven represents the regenerative fountain of the book of Revelation.

> And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (*Revelation* 21:6)

It is also significant to note that the poem's epigraph can be found in *Song of Songs* 4:16, where the preceding verse mentions a "fountain of gardens, a well of living waters." The image of water found in the Old Testament often acted as a prefigurement of Christ; Vaughan's regenerative fountain is likewise a type of Christ. The "divers stones" (55) in the cistern create an image reflecting the diversity of Christ. The "bright, and round" (55) stones dance through the

waters "quick as light" (57) and represent the light that is Christ.[37] The "ill-shap'd, and dull" (56) stones represent Christ's burden, the sin of all humanity, which Christ bore as he, "more heavy then the night / Nail'd to the Centre stood" (59-60).

The theory of typology is one that Vaughan uses effectively to enrich the characters of his poetry, Biblical and non-Biblical alike. In "The Night" Vaughan points his reader directly to the story of Nicodemus in *John* chapter three.[38] Vaughan uses Nicodemus' encounter with Christ in a typological fashion, making Nicodemus an archetype of the Christian pilgrimage, one searching through darkness for a glimmer of truth.

In Nicodemus lies every soul which has found salvation at a dark and miserable hour, and yet that very fact makes the night less dark and more glorious; thus the thematic swing of Vaughan's poem. His defence of the night becomes an appraisal of the night's value to the soul and the night's purpose to God as a time of undistracted progress. Vaughan must have felt a specific

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[37] "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (*John* 1:4-9).

[38] The central theme of "The Night" has already been discussed above, here I wish to explore the typological significance of the poem.

fraternity with Nicodemus, for in Nicodemus' journey there lies the course of an intellectual soul advancing towards truth in a world of darkness. This fraternity is emphasized when Vaughan's speaker calls out:

O who will tell me, where
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!
What hallow'd solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower. (13-16)

In the fourth stanza of "The Night," Vaughan connects the Old Testament house of the covenant, the ark of the testimony (*Exodus* 25:16-22)--the type--with the New Testament house of the covenant, Christ (*Hebrews* 8:6-10)--the antitype. Consequently, Christ, God's covenant, resides in his "own living works" (21), meaning his own fleshly body, not merely amid the natural world. Read from a typological perspective, the following lines hold an even deeper significance.

No mercy-seat of gold,
No dead and dusty *Cherub*, nor carv'd stone,
But his own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone. (19-22)

In an effort to stress his point about Christ's significance, Vaughan relies upon one of the Bible's most important typological statements--with Christ comes a

new and better covenant, one prefigured by the old law: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (*Galatians* 3:24).

The sixth stanza of "The Night," as has already been discussed, holds significance based heavily upon Biblical typology. The stanza can be read merely as a description of Christ's solitary nights, but Vaughan's use of imagery draws forth a deeper signification--the typological patterns of the Bible and the importance of Christ as the central figure of these patterns; he is the primary antitype answering and bringing to perfection all of the Bible's types.

Just as Christ is the Bible's central antitype, there is also a central type to which Christ becomes the fulfillment--the law of God. The Law (the Old Testament type), and Christ (the New Testament antitype), are at the heart of Biblical typology and are the two subjects characterizing God's relationship to humanity. All of the typological interest for theologians, Vaughan included, is rooted in the contrast of these two subjects.

In part I of *Silex Scintillans*, Vaughan has a poem called "The Law, and the Gospel": the two poles of Biblical typology. This poem is especially important because it reveals that Vaughan understood typology in its true sense. Furthermore, the imagery of the poem demonstrates that Vaughan was adept at creating a sense of types in his poetry to draw his audience into a very

richly blended picture of Old and New Testament Christianity. In other words, Vaughan effectively created images that simultaneously invoked the vision of two worlds and stressed that the picture of God from the Old Testament must be combined with Christ of the New Testament in order to gain the most profound understanding of His nature.

The first two stanzas present the two poles of typology in their characterizations of God, and Vaughan compares each of the two sides of God's character to a Biblical mountain top. Stanza I depicts a wrathful God, the God of the Law which was given to Moses and the Israelites on Mount Sinai.[39]

Lord, when thou didst on *Sinai* pitch
And shine from *Paran*, when a firie Law
Pronounc'd with thunder, and thy threats did thaw
Thy Peoples hearts, when all thy weeds were rich
And Inaccessible for light,
Terrour, and might,
How did poor flesh (which after thou didst weare,)

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[39] "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them" (*Deuteronomy* 33:1-2).

Then faint, and fear!

Thy Chosen flock, like leafs in a high wind,

Whisper'd obediences, and their heads Inclin'd. (1-10)

In this stanza Vaughan has depicted the most prominent Old Testament vision of God: the God of fire and thunder, the God inspiring fear and awe. Vaughan describes a God whose essence deters human intimacy, whose garments "[are] rich / And Inaccessible for light, /Terrour, and might." Vaughan extends God's awesome image by adding the metaphor of windblown trees, equating the power of God over his people with a "high wind" as it bows compliant leaves.

The image of God's people as leaves is a Biblical metaphor which prefigures the role of the church, described by Christ in the New Testament: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (*John* 15:5). The second stanza describes the vision of God prominent in the New Testament: the God of love and comfort and mercy, the God of Mount Sion. Unlike the inaccessible God of the first stanza, this God can be touched as a child touches its parent.

But now since we to *Sion* came,

And through thy bloud thy glory see,

With filial Confidence we touch ev'n thee;

And where the other mount all clad in flame,

And threatning Clouds would not so much

As 'bide the touch,

We climb up this, and have too all the way

Thy hand our stay,

Nay, thou tak'st ours, and (which ful Comfort brings)

Thy Dove too bears us on her sacred wings. (11-20)

Although references to Sion abound in the New Testament, its origin is in the Old Testament. Mount Sion/Zion was a Canaanite fortress conquered by David to become the city of Jerusalem, or the City of David (2 Samuel 5:7). Israel's salvation was to come out of Zion (Christ was born through David's lineage) and Mount Sion soon became synonymous with heaven. This is a dwelling point because it is important to see that Vaughan has connected both of his stanzas to their typological counterparts. The first stanza, representing the Old Testament God, is closed with words of the Christ who was to come in the New Testament; while the second stanza, representing the New Testament God, is opened with the Zion that came before in the Old Testament.

The third stanza is a prayer for the evidence of both visions of God, a plea for the totality of God to come and reside in the heart of the speaker. He asks for three pairs of seeds to be planted within him, each pair comprising

characteristics of the Old and New Testament figures of God. Like the vine implied in the first stanza, Vaughan desires the two branches of God's character, the Old and the New, to become entwined in his heart.

O plant in me thy *Gospel*, and thy *Law*,
Both *Faith*, and *Awe*;
So twist them in my heart, that ever there
I may as wel as *Love*, find too thy *fear*! (27-30)

The fourth stanza continues the sentiment of the third and the speaker prays that he will incur not God's wrath, but his blessing. The stanza begins with a brief statement on the difference between the Law and the Gospel, the Old and New covenants God has with humanity.

Let me not spil, but drink thy bloud,
Not break thy fence, and by a black Excess
Force down a Just Curse, when thy hands would bless;
Let me not scatter, and despise my food,
Or nail those blessed limbs again
Which bore my pain. (31-36)

The difference between the Law and Gospel lies in the stanza's first line (31) where the blood spilt in the sacrifices of the Old Testament is replaced by the blood spilt at Christ's death and the practice of Communion, the symbolic

drinking of Christ's blood in the New testament.[40] Ultimately, Vaughan's speaker does not want Christ's sacrifice to be for naught. He prays that he will not, by sinning, break God's "fence," Christ the veil,[41] nor ignorantly throw away Christ's provision, his food, the very source of his spiritual sustenance.[42]

The contrast created by the reference in line 33 to a curse versus a blessing resembles Old Testament prophecy. Prophets, being the voice of God on earth, generally pronounced their oracles as one of two types--an oracle of weal, or an oracle of woe. A prophet bearing good news always began with "Blessed be the . . ." and one who brought bad news started with "Woe to the. . . ." Inherent in these oracles is the Old Testament/New Testament, Law/Gospel model, for those who were cursed were not salvaged from God's wrath and those who were blessed were saved. Thus the Law is an oracle of woe, a "Just Curse" upon man for his sins, while the Gospel is an oracle of

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[40]e.g. *Luke* 22:19-20.

[41] "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (*Isaiah* 60:18). These are Isaiah's prophetic words to Israel. He speaks of the promise God
has made and of the heaven that is coming. I footnote this verse because the walls of this city are called "Salvation." Those who wish to enter the city must pass through these walls. The significance is that Christ is the wall, or fence, between God and humanity.

[42] "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (*Acts* 14:17).

weal, a blessing through the sacrifice of the Messiah. Not surprisingly, Vaughan has placed an example of Biblical typology into his poem about Biblical typology, for the distinction between oracles of Old Testament prophets prefigures the distinction between the Law and the Gospel.

Typological theory is, in a sense, not unlike the basic goal of mysticism, for the mystic quest to achieve unity with God, to move beyond the shadowy world and into the "larger reality," is reflected in the antitype's fulfilment of the type. The antitype receives the emphasis in typology for it is the perfection of the type, the completion of what was begun, the "larger reality" implied by the shadowy type. Vaughan surely was aware of this, since he placed the poem "The Law, and the Gospel" under "G" in his table of titles, rather than "L."

The above connection to mysticism brings to light another factor of Vaughan's use of typology--imagery involving reference to shadows. Since a type is perceived as the incomplete form or shadow of the antitype, this sheds new light on Vaughan's use of shadow-imagery, for perhaps his intention is not to allude to the neo-platonic concept of invisible truths but to shadowy types, the foreshadowing of antitypes.

In "Jacob's Pillow, and Pillar," Vaughan recalls the Old Testament account of Jacob naming the stone he slept on as the pillar of God's house.

This stone prefigures Christ's calling to Peter, the rock of Christ's church after his crucifixion: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (*Matthew* 16:18). But Vaughan also makes himself Jacob's antitype, suggesting that their plights are similar, though Jacob stood farther from the Day-star,[43] Christ, than he does.

> Thou from the Day-star a long way didst stand
> And all that distance was Law and command.
> But we a healing Sun by day and night,
> Have our sure Guardian, and our leading light;
> What thou didst hope for and believe, we finde
> And feel a friend most ready, sure and kinde.
> Thy pillow was but type and shade at best,
> But we the substance have, and on him rest. (47-54)

Vaughan uses Jacob's pillow, the stone, as a type of Christ, the rock, on whom all may find their rest (*Matthew* 11:28). Vaughan then alternates between the standard distinctions of the Old and New Testament, type and antitype, Law and Gospel figures of typology: Law and command (48) vs. guidance and

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[43] "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (*Revelation* 22:16).

healing (49-50), things hoped for (51) vs. things felt and sure (52). He establishes the typological essence of the poem and then concludes by suspiciously contrasting the "substance" of the antitype with the "shade" of the type. Shadows, then, are conspicuously placed in *Silex Scintillans*, carrying implications of both life and death and raising points of typological significance as well as concepts particular to renaissance neoplatonism.

One of the Bible's most crucial subjects, and one that appears repeatedly throughout Vaughan's two volumes, is that of death. In the third section of "Resurrection and Immortality" the soul describes to the body the new freedoms the arrival of death will provide, including the ability to discern beyond the "mists, and shadows" that "passe" (51-52). Only through death will the speaker be able to "pierce all their wayes" and "reade some *Starre*, or *Min'rall*" (56-59) which had previously held a mystery. The level of understanding that the speaker desires reflects a central idea in Vaughan's conception of the universe: God's creation bears His signature and is a source of His truth. Nature, like a second set of scriptures, holds many types prefiguring the antitype who is Christ; thus, as has been demonstrated, the resurrection of the silk-worm is a type of Christ's resurrection.[44]

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[44] The relation of the silk-worm to Christ's resurrection is discussed in the first chapter on page 19.

Vaughan's search for types in Nature is found again in a later poem, "The Retreate." As with any typological example, Christ is prefigured by something that seemingly has no relation to him.[45] In this case, Vaughan spies "his bright-face," the face of Christ, while gazing on "some *gilded Cloud*, or *flowre*" (10-11). The Biblical precedent for Vaughan's use of a cloud as the symbol of Christ is found in *Exodus* 13:21-22.[46] The flower image is commonly used to represent Christ as well (see *Song of Songs* 2:1). So when Vaughan writes,

> My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
>
> And in those weaker glories spy
>
> Some shadows of eternity (12-14),

one cannot assume that he is implying the neo-platonic mode of shadowy (i.e., relative) truths. Rather, Vaughan relies on his audience's knowledge of

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[45] Vaughan's use of typology reveals significant parallels with metaphysical poetry.

> [I]n true metaphysical poetry the intellectual parallel, or the recondite image, expresses awareness of a world in which the separate and apparently unrelated parts strangely echo one another. They are suddenly seen in the poetry as facets of a single whole (Bennett 76).

[46] "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people".

shadows as types, and he invites his readers to share in his observation of the "shades" and types that exist in the world.[47]

With an understanding of the typological precedents of the Bible and the basis of typological theory as it existed in the minds of the seventeenth-century reader, the poetry of Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* becomes more significant than many commentators realize. An example of a poem enriched by an understanding of typology is "Isaac's Marriage." At face value, it is a description of the holy courtship of Rebekah, but "Isaac's Marriage" at heart reveals the value Vaughan places on typology. He does not view typology as merely a poetic device or theological exercise; he sees typology as one of the defining factors in his perception of the world (geocosm) he lives in and the universe (macrocosm) beyond it; in other words, Vaughan sees typology as an essential part of understanding his relationship with God and fundamental in drawing him nearer to oneness with his Creator.

The overt subject of "Isaac's Marriage" is Isaac, but the prefigurative significance of Isaac's marriage is his son Jacob,[48] and ultimately Christ who

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[47] Another poem where Vaughan's use of shadow may reflect his interest in typology is "[I walkt. . . .]." His desire to see "Thy sacred way" (51) is encouraged by the evidence of God perceived in the "Masques and shadows" (50) of the natural world.

[48] Jacob, incidentally, is named in five different poems in *Silex Scintillans*, more than any other Biblical figure aside from Jesus.

was descended from Jacob's line. The wooing of Rebekah is referred to as a "holy courtship" because Vaughan's description of the romance is far different from that appearing in any secular song of love and courtship. The seventeenth century had its share of love poetry, the influence of which is evident in Vaughan's earlier verse (e.g. *Olor Iscanus*), but as Vaughan points out in this poem, Rebekah, in a most uncourtly or un-seventeenth-century manner, was wooed with neither "oath, nor Complement" (13), nor "pompous train, nor *Antick* crowd / Of young, gay swearers, with their needlesse, lowd / Retinue" (21-23). Rebekah was won to Isaac by his prayers, which were no doubt consonant with God's will.

> But here was ne'r a Complement, not one
> Spruce, supple cringe, or study'd look put on,
> All was plain, modest truth: Nor did she come
> In *rowles* and *Curles*, mincing and stately dumb,
> But in a Virgins native blush and fears
> Fresh as those roses, which the day-spring wears.
> (31-40)

Of course, Vaughan's purpose is not merely to point out the unique courtship between Isaac and Rebekah, but as with most of his poetry, a deeper comparison is being drawn. In this case, the comparison is another typological

one, one we could also uncover in the Biblical account of Isaac's marriage. Vaughan's reference to the "roses"[49] of the "day-spring"[50] (36) are directly tied to Christ and imply a symbolic attachment between Isaac's marriage and the role of Christ as bridegroom. Aside from the Biblical references, the "day-spring" represents the dawning of a new day, and thus a regeneration or renewal. These are key allusions to associate with Christ, who is the 'new day' the Bible refers to and the source of humanity's regeneration.

In addition, marriage is sometimes used scripturally to signify the union of God and His people. In the Bible's case, God's children, His church, represent the bride which will one day be greeted by Christ, the bridegroom, in a marriage-like union.[51] But as Vaughan knew, the typological significance of Isaac's story in Genesis runs even deeper than that of a mere marriage. The obvious fact is that Christ was a descendant of the line of Abraham, and God's

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[49] "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (*Song of Songs* 2:1).

[50] "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (*Luke* 1:78).

[51] John the Baptist denied that he was the Christ saying that his followers belonged to Jesus, who was the Bridegroom.

> Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (*John* 3:28-29).

promise to Abraham as passed through Isaac and realized in the birth of the Messiah generations later.[52] But the metaphorical manner in which Vaughan describes Isaac's marriage reveals the significance hidden therein.

> So from *Lahai-roi's* Well some spicie cloud
> Woo'd by the Sun swels up to be his shrowd,
> And from his moist wombe weeps a fragrant showre,
> Which, scatter'd in a thousand pearls, each flowre
> And herb partakes. (53-57)

Quite ingeniously, Vaughan mixes the Sun/son metaphor with the cloud/shrowd metaphor to establish the paradox that Christ (the son) was involved in the wooing of his great ancestor, Rebekah, and thus played a part in his own birth. The result of this important marriage is described in conspicuously sensuous imagery through the analogy with evaporation and condensation, for Christ, the sun, drew for himself the flesh, or water, that

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[52] "And [the angel of the LORD] said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (*Genesis* 22:16-17).

would become the cloud/shrowd of the world, or the veil[53] through which all people could come to God.[54]

The situation of Rebekah's marriage to Isaac is no less a spiritual metaphor than it is typological. The courtship was nothing more than "modest truth" as Vaughan puts it, "divine simplicity," a wooing performed not by the courting subject so much as by his servant. Vaughan would no doubt describe God's wooing of human souls as nothing less than "modest truth" either, often ministered by His servants. Another, less obvious aspect of the typology which is connected to the spiritual metaphor of the poem is the union between God and humanity, the marriage of the divine and the imperfect which would occur in heaven. Isaac prefigures this marriage because his marriage occurred out of his homeland and in the land God had promised his people; thus Isaac's marriage, like a spiritual encounter, involves the meeting of two different lands or worlds. Here Vaughan places the crux of his poem's intent, "marriage of all states" (45), which he bases upon the metaphor of the process of evaporation/condensation. This metaphoric union supports Vaughan's

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[53] "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;" (*Hebrews* 10:19-20).

[54] Water is a significant image in this poem and is used by Vaughan in a very similar manner in "Religion" and "The Search," the two poems prior to "Isaac's Marriage" in the collection. Each time the well is used as a metaphor for the origin of Christianity, the ancestry of Christ.

conception of a diverse macrocosm and provides a multi-layered significance. First of all, the metaphor signifies the union of Isaac and Rebekah. Their union of foreign lands is reflected in the meeting of the earth and the sky, water and air, each of which represents a 'land' foreign to the other, a distinct part of the universe: geocosm and macrocosm.

> And from his moist wombe weeps a fragrant showre,
> Which, scatter'd in a thousand pearls, each flowre
> And herb partakes, where having stood awhile
> And something coold the parch'd, and thirstie Isle,
> The thankful Earth unlocks her self, and blends,
> A thousand odours, which (all mixt,) she sends
> Up in one cloud, and so returns the skies
> That dew they lent, a breathing sacrifice. (55-62)

Vaughan combines the elements of earth and sky with a frank eroticism, forcing us to realize the product of Isaac and Rebekah's connubial union, the "breathing sacrifice," or Christ, the living sacrifice, also a product of Heaven and earth or geocosm and macrocosm. This metaphor is also significant in its application as a spiritual conceit, representing the union of the finite with the

infinite, the mortal with the divine.[55] As has been discussed already, Vaughan believes that the human essence enters into a union with Christ who draws it from its earthly existence after death to be restored and reunited with God. The apostle Paul writes the following concerning the duty of Christian souls in his letter to the church at Rome.

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies *a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (*Romans* 12:1, emphasis mine)

Vaughan saw that Paul's "reasonable service" is not unlike a return of the dew to the skies that lent it, "a breathing sacrifice." The final significant factor of the evaporation/ condensation model brings us once again to typology. Vaughan's lines present the Old and New Testaments in their contrasts and collective meaning. The picture Vaughan creates with this metaphor is that of a barren land being watered by a refreshing shower, and these two figures represent the Old and New Testament perceptions of God. The Old Testament perceives God as the Sun of Justice, from whose heat no wickedness can hide.[56] Thus the "parch'd, and thirstie Isle" represents the hopelessness of

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[55] Vaughan uses the evaporation/condensation model in "The Waterfall" to symbolize a passage through death and the movement from an earthly existence to eternity with God.

[56] "His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (*Psalm* 19:6).

humanity under Mosaic law, which declares that all people are guilty of sin and liable to God's justice. But as the New Testament reveals, the burden of the law was to reveal the need for a saviour,[57] and the dry land shows the need for refreshment in a "fragrant showre." The metaphor works another way too, for like a cloud veiling the sun's heat, Christ acted as a veil, a veil through which men might come to God and not be consumed by the brightness of God's glory.[58] Since Christ and God are parts of the same entity, it can be said that the cloud, or the veil which is Christ, was "Woo'd by the Sun" (the sun is also metaphorically tied to Christ) to be his own "shrowd" (54). This notion demonstrates the omniscience and omnipresence of Christ, who has the ability to choose for himself an earthly body centuries before it is even conceived.

In the poem's last stanza, Vaughan plants several reminders of the fact that typology is an essential mode of interpreting the significance of scripture. Firstly, he draws upon father/son relationships, specifically the relationship of Abraham and Isaac.

> Thus soar'd thy soul, who (though young,) didst inherit
>
> Together with his bloud, thy fathers spirit,

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[57] "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (*Romans* 5:20).

[58] *Hebrews* 10:19-20. See also the discussion of "The Night" above.

Whose active zeal, and tried faith were to thee

Familiar ever since thy Infancie. (63-66)

God's promise to Abraham was passed on to his only son with Sarah, Isaac. Abraham later came very near to sacrificing his only son in a test of *faith*, a test that prefigures God's sacrifice of his only son, Christ, in whom *faith* then becomes requisite for salvation. The relationship of father and son is deepened in light of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. God, the father, is the central figure in the Old Testament and Christ, the son, is central to the New Testament. Together, father and son represent the two poles of Biblical typology, and their personalities can also be characterized by the two poles mentioned earlier, the Law and the Gospel. Vaughan carries this concept into the poem's last lines, transforming the father/son opposition to a contrast of age and youth. Isaac was set to faith very early and he learned to have the same steadfast faith as his father that most followers of God struggle to attain for most of their lives.

Others were tym'd and train'd up to't but thou

Didst thy swift yeers in piety out-grow,

Age made them rev'rend, and a snowie head,

But thou wert so, e're time his snow could shed.

(67-70)

The poem's last two lines contrast youthfulness and age, but place an emphasis upon youth "First." Vaughan's suggestion is that in order to understand Isaac in his old age, one must look first at his character in youth and the faith he held as a child. By maintaining a typological perspective on Isaac, the significance of this distinction comes back to Christ, the son of God, who is the key to understanding God. Just as Isaac's youth and age are parts of the same man, so Christ and God are parts of the same being. "Then, who would truly limn thee out, must paint / First, a *young Patriarch*, then a *marri'd Saint*" (71-72). Here Vaughan, as he has done throughout *Silex Scintillans*, chooses to emphasize Christ; for Christ, the "young Patriarch," must be known before any union or marriage to God can take place.

GLIMPSING ETERNITY:

VAUGHAN'S SEARCH FOR GOD

Henry Vaughan is deeply moved by his universe; he is moved so much by his observation of it that he makes a record of the many ways in which God's telling signature can be found throughout the world. Searching for a pathway to God, Vaughan sees all the elements of nature--the earth, the trees, the birds, the stones, the flowers, the streams, the rain, the clouds, the stars, and even himself--pointing instinctively in the direction of Christ, who becomes central to the theme of *Silex Scintillans*. Through his contemplation of the various creatures and entities throughout the earth, Vaughan envisions God's mark in the hearts of His creation and proclaims that those hearts, like his, long for the day when they will escape the barrier established by the Fall and be united again with their glorious Creator.

As humanity's understanding of the world grows more complex, the world itself seems to increase in complexity. Vaughan is not about to let the new discoveries in science deter him from using the universe as a model of God's perfection. Nor is He going to let the maturing intellect of the world prevent him from finding the image of God, the image of flawlessness, in the face of an increasingly complex science. Vaughan incorporates a rich perspective of the macrocosm, one that adapts to his growing understanding of

both the world and God. By envisioning the "geocosm" as a distinct part of the universe, separating the microcosm and macrocosm, Vaughan is able to imagine his human condition opposite two other states of being, each revealing new aspects of the relationship between God and His creation. Vaughan's elaborate perspective of the universe then permits him to examine his own condition against a more intricate backdrop and ultimately enables a more sophisticated and satisfying examination of himself than previous conceptions allowed.

Vaughan is a poet of faith and intellect, made certain by his ability to find the reflections of perfection in and through an imperfect universe. Within these glimpses of eternity, he establishes a personal understanding of the cosmos and measures his own earthly limitations against the infinite reach of God. By combining his knowledge of mysticism and renaissance philosophy with Scriptural and religious learning, Vaughan is able to travel far along on the "mystic path;" he is able to come very near to unity with God, perhaps as near as he thinks possible without entering into the end of days, the point of Christ's return, where Vaughan believes all are drawn into final union with God.

In light of this, Vaughan cannot be considered a practitioner of orthodox mysticism, for just as his Christian beliefs are influenced by his

philosophical knowledge, so is his mysticism influenced by his Christianity. Ultimately, Vaughan imagines Christ at the centre of all things and acting as the final, renewing agent who makes complete union with God a possibility. In the meantime, Vaughan must wait for that reunion, enduring all the frustrations and sorrow of a soul unable to be completely free from the veil of sin it bears, unable to part the veil that clouds his Pilgrim eye.

Vaughan sees this veil in every aspect of life, a butterfly's cocoon, the clouds that hide the stars, even his own flesh is in conflict with the spiritual desire instinctive to all creatures: the desire to enter into oneness with God. But he understands the nature of this struggle, and the irony rooted at its heart. For without the light God has planted in His creation, the knowledge of Him, there would be no conflict in the heart of creation.

Despite the self-imposed nature of humanity, sinfulness, there exists the seed of desire for God, for holiness--thus the persistence of free will, an essential part of Vaughan's existence. Here again Vaughan leaves the path of orthodox mysticism, for he believes that souls reunited with God will maintain their individuality through Christ, instead of being lost in His awesome effulgence, like the light of glow-worms extinguished in brightness of the sun.

Vaughan has made typology a fundamental tool of his understanding. Throughout *Silex Scintillans*, he transforms objects of nature into types for

which his speaker is the antitype, enabling him to envision his relationship with God. He searches out standard Biblical types and projects them onto his poetic subjects, further enriching the depth of their experiences and the meaning therein. Finally, having melded natural and Biblical types into prefigurements of himself, Vaughan molds them together into a hearty expectation of the one, true antitype--Christ. On Christ Vaughan places his intent and his hope. His poetry describes the experience of a soul separated from God, but every sense of anguish is met with the anticipation of God's renewing power made possible through Christ, who Vaughan is certain will one day,

> Arise, arise!
> And like old clothes fold up these skies,
> This long worn veil: then shine and spread
> [His] own bright self over each head. ("L'Envoy" 7-10)

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