"Water and the spirit" a study of Henry Vaughan's developing style in Silex Scintillans.

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"WATER AND THE SPIRIT"
A STUDY OF HENRY VAUGHAN'S DEVELOPING STYLE IN SILEX SCINTILLANS

by
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Professor in Charge

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Abstract

The primary theme of Henry Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* 1655 edition is his discovery of the Christian teaching: "unless one is born of the water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." (John 3:5.) Vaughan's Christian regeneration unifies the volumes of *Silex Scintillans*, while it also sets the second volume apart from the first. For it is in the second that he writes with a peaceful heart about his strengthening faith and assured salvation.

The major conflict in *Silex Scintillans* begins with Vaughan's celebration of spiritual rebirth. In the first volume his attempts are thwarted by the presence of a veil which exists between himself and the Divine. In earlier poetry Vaughan prays for passage into heaven and eventual union with God after death. While in the later poetry he discovers God's presence in nature and this knowledge encourages him to look for God to come to him during his lifetime. Vaughan concludes, the veil between himself and God is really a barrier over his own heart. This he can remove by increasing his faith. Similarly, he believes the absence of this veil will facilitate a mystical union with the Divine.

In both volumes the water imagery weaves its way through the poetry, carrying with it the theme of Baptism and rebirth. In Volume One, Vaughan sees water's restoring power as a part of nature's cyclical process and he uses it as a metaphor which
he experiences God at work in nature and is spiritually re-
stored.

What makes Vaughan's poetry move toward a new style is
his increased interest in humanity and his growing awareness
of creation. While in the first volume he speaks of his own
regeneration, in the second he speaks of poetry written to
interpret God's work on earth for the purpose of his salva-
tion, and also for the reader.
A Study of Poetry in Book I of *Silex Scintillans*

Henry Vaughan's 1655 edition of *Silex Scintillans* marks a change in style. Prior to this publication, his work was similar to John Donne's secular poetry.¹ Vaughan's change to religious poetry came as a sudden conversion or, as he says, "regeneration." In the introduction to the second volume, Vaughan writes a tribute to his dear friend George Herbert for his new awareness of God.² This tribute is generous but unnecessary as we need only to read briefly in Book One of *Silex Scintillans* before we are aware of the obvious similarities. Hutchinson asserts, "there is no example in English literature of one poet borrowing as extensively from another."³ Other critics


have also written on the strong resemblances between such poems as Herbert's "Giddiness" and "The Pulley," and Vaughan's "The Pursuit" and "Man." Again, there are two poems, "The Storm" and "Easter Day" (and perhaps a third, "Sun-Rays"), so close to Herbert's originals that they have been described as imitations.  

Although Vaughan's tribute to Herbert appears in the preface of the 1655 edition, when Book Two was added and Book One merely reprinted, it is the first book that has the greater number of similarities to Herbert's poetry.

Despite this derivativeness, criticism focuses on Book One. When major poems in Book Two are considered, little is done to emphasize their difference from poems in the first book. For, although the books are published together, it is in the second that Vaughan develops his own style; he moves away from the poetry of his contemporaries and solves the problems of his own salvation, his purpose as a poet, and his quest to see God. It is my intention to illustrate the distinction between these volumes by showing how the themes of the first volume are brought to fruition in the second. For, in the second book, Vaughan maps his own path to salvation.

James D. Simmonds, Masques of God Form and Theme in the Poetry of Henry Vaughan (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp. 133-34.

4Pettet, p. 52.
Before dealing with the first book of *Silex Scintillans* it is necessary to consider Vaughan as the "nature poet." Vaughan's approach to nature sets him apart from his contemporaries. At the turn of the century, critics who studied Vaughan's use of nature attributed his interest to the experiences of his childhood in the Welsh Countryside. H. F. Lyte makes such a statement in a note which appeared in his edition of *The Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations of Henry Vaughan*, published in 1847.5 A. C. Judson's "Henry Vaughan as a Nature Poet" agrees: "the beauty of the Welsh landscape was important to Vaughan's ultimate appreciation of nature." Then he adds, "Vaughan is a nature poet with a metaphysical bent."6

Elizabeth Holmes elaborates on Vaughan's use of nature in *Henry Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy*. She interprets his praise of creation as his attempt to communicate with the spirit which lives in nature, and thus attributes his use of nature more to the mystical influence of his twin brother Thomas than to the landscape of his childhood.7


However, as Hutchinson points out, Vaughan himself elected to use the name "Silurist" in a tribute to the region of South Wales where he spent almost his entire life. Whether his poetry was written as praise of his own country, with specific references to the River Usk, or as a generalized tribute to all of nature is not clear in his poetry. Such biographical criticism was not the only approach to early critics. Some argued that Vaughan was the forerunner of Romanticism and fathered Wordsworth's pantheism. More recent critics have dispensed with this contention and focused instead on his mysticism.

Helen White calls Vaughan's search for God in nature a mystical experience which he translates into poetry. This poetry, she says, can be divided into two areas. First, is his recognition of an order among natural creatures, and second is his explanation of a commerce between heaven

8 Hutchinson, p. 77.
9 Elizabeth Holmes, p. 10, states, Vaughan "seeks to merge himself and be lost in the midst of the natural scene." Leishman, p. 169, states that like Wordsworth, Vaughan "found inspiration in remembering the great moments of childhood."

10 Pettet, p. 93, states, "We must entirely separate his (mainly hermetic) conception of the Divine in nature from Wordsworth's pantheism and belief in the possibility of spiritual communion through the medium of nature." James Simmonds, pp. 14-19, states, "Wordsworth's pantheism is entirely different from Vaughan's use of nature as an allegory and his mystical experiences in nature."
and earth. Furthermore, she explains that the purpose for his writing is not to create art but rather to save his own soul.\textsuperscript{11} H. J. Oliver and Robert Allen Durr investigate White's and other critics' charges of mysticism. Oliver concludes that Vaughan is not truly a mystic, but rather a poet who uses mystical languages.\textsuperscript{12} Durr, however, argues that Vaughan's mystical use of nature is part of a larger poetic scheme for spiritual regeneration. Thus, the only way for Vaughan to come to know his God is through the mystical appreciation of nature which ultimately is an act of grace.\textsuperscript{13}

Judith Richardson also contends Vaughan's praise of creation is not mystical, but rather works as a part of an elaborate Neoplatonic scheme. She holds Vaughan's nature manifests both the glory and providence of his creator, but his ecstatic contemplation of it does not unite him


\textsuperscript{13} Robert Allen Durr, "Vaughan's Theme and its Pattern: Regeneration," \textit{Studies in Philology}, 54 (1958), p. 16. Durr explicates "Regeneration," and he contends the poem is structured to "convey insight into the initial stages of the Mystic Way, Awakening, Purgation, and Illumination, and it ends with a prayer for the death of self which is rebirth in God."
with the Divine. Richardson explains Vaughan's presentation of this praise is indebted to Plotinus and Renaissance Neoplatonists like Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Vaughan utilizes the philosophy that reality is a series of interlocking levels, reaching from mutable imperfect matter to an immutable perfect one. "Therefore, as the poet responds to the goodness and beauty he sees in the physical world, he becomes part of the universal ascent to God." Richardson is in agreement with Leishman, who also sees Neoplatonism as central in Vaughan's use of nature.

Leishman's focus is, however, more on the seventeenth-century debate about how man could best employ what he observed in nature. On one side is Francis Bacon's empiricism and utilitarianism, and on the other is the less practical, more ideal, view that held the world as a "living organism" which interpreted and revealed God. Vaughan, of course, was idealistic in his beliefs. What attracted him most to nature was her essential and pure innocence, obedience, and orderliness in contrast to the caprice of sinful man. Furthermore, the purity of all

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15 Leishman, p. 170.

16 Leishman, p. 176.
creation provides Vaughan with a "system of divine hiero-
glyphics, revealing to the loving and careful observer
something of the will and power of God."17

Louis Martz, in The Paradise Within employs Leishman's
contention that nature provides Vaughan with an ordered
passage to the Divine. Martz writes that Vaughan is not a
mystic, but rather a platonic Christian who employs nature
for the purpose of fitting into a pattern as it is estab-
lished by the Augustinian Triad. This Triad suggests three
books: "The Book of the Scriptures, the Book of Nature,
and the Book of the Soul."18 "When man is enlightened by
Biblical revelation, he can grasp the vestiges and traces
of God in external nature; and from this knowledge can turn
inward to find the image of God within himself."19

Tha Augustinian Doctrine is also part of Ross Garner's
discussion of Vaughan. Garner recognizes, as does Martz,
Vaughan's view that man's position of earth is tainted by
original sin. But there is hope, for man is not simply
fallen; he is fallen and redeemed. Therefore, "it is
Vaughan's response to God's creation that ultimately leads
him to see God working to turn evil into good in a

17 Leishman, p. 176.
18 Louis Martz, p. 19.
19 Louis Martz, p. 18.
providential scheme of regeneration." Thus, man can achieve grace if he is willing to seek out the existence of God in nature, for this will lead him to the knowledge of God beyond.20

Despite a great deal of disagreement among critics as to the scheme Vaughan designed his poetry to follow, there is, it seems, this common ground: Vaughan's purpose for going to nature was to find elements of divine truth in God's own creation. But when modern critics like Pettet, Leishman, Garner, Martz, and Durr begin to examine the elaborate processes which they contend Vaughan deliberately incorporated in his poetry, their cases are often overstated. We must try not to overestimate Vaughan's intentions for employing mystical or hermetic metaphors. It is important to see the poetry as an art form written by a Christian poet whose process of self-expression was greatly influenced by contemporary thought. Certain passages like "the world hatches" and "dear secret greenness" reflect the hermetic beliefs of his brother, while other accounts of the Spirit of God speaking from the waterfall or the


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"Divine seed" growing secretly inside all creatures originate from mysticism. However, other seventeenth-century contemporaries influenced the framework for Vaughan's poetry; and criticism has appropriately emphasized the influence of the Augustinian Triad and Neoplatonism on Vaughan's writing style.

Many of the poems in Volume One follow the Augustinian pattern as it is set down in the formal meditations prescribed by such writers as Saint Loyola or Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Some poems can be categorized as either preparing for prayer or culminating in prayer. For instance, "Psalm 121" is written as a prayer. The poem begins with an address to nature who has inspired him.

Up to those bright, and gladsome hils,
    Whence flowes my weal, and mirth,
I look, and sigh for him who fills
    (Unseen), both heaven, and earth.
(p. 220, ll. 1-4)

The speaker then develops the poem in praise of his creator who is, at once, his "help," "hope," and "sun" as well as the shield to his soul who is with him always:

Whether abroad amidst the Crowd,
      Or els within my door,
He is my Pillar and my Cloud
      Now, and for evermore.
(p. 220, ll. 17-20)

This poem also takes into account the Augustinian "Triad" (bible, nature, man). Vaughan uses a Biblical passage, Psalm 121, to trace the presence of God in nature and the poem acknowledges the need for man to let the Holy Spirit into his heart. Much of the poetry is not as obvious as "Psalm 121," but nearly all of the poems use Biblical experiences in conjunction with natural phenomena which in turn has a lesson for man. In another poem, Vaughan recognizes how the blood of Christ entering into his frail heart was like being touched by fire when, really, he was touched by "dew." He then testifies the entrance of Christ let him grow toward God.

Frequently, Vaughan's poetry shows his desire to alienate himself from sinful society. His new piety leads Vaughan to feel the necessity to retire or move away from the city.\(^{22}\) This yearning for purity is reflected in the Neoplatonic imagery in such poems as "Vanity of Spirit" where he tells of his search for truth and his attainment of shadows. As the volume is read, one realizes that consistent application of these conventional modes of religious expression provides a frame for what at first appears to be miscellaneous collection of private meditations.

Pettet sees these poems fitting into small groups. "There are Biblical subjects and personages on Christ,\(^ {22} \) Friedenreich, p. 147.
on central articles of Christian faith, on various church
days and festivals, and on Vaughan's own spiritual
progress." In the footnote which follows this comment,
Pettet contends the poems appear at random in the volumes
because they are placed in the manner in which they were
written. He believes there are too many isolated themes
and small groupings to support the possibility that Vaughan
reorganized his work before publication. Thus, the progress
which Pettet refers to is a literal progression toward
a discovery which can be found at the conclusion of the
volume. This argument is supported by Georgia Christo-
pher's discussion of Vaughan's spiritual progress. He
argues this chronological placement of poems in the first
volume demonstrates a parallel between Biblical characters'
discovery of Christ and Vaughan's journey to salvation.24

While it is valuable to argue that the volume depicts
Vaughan's pilgrimage to salvation and the placement of the
poems shows spiritual progress, we cannot say Vaughan comes
to terms with his salvation. The tone of the 1650 edition
echoes the poet's turbulent quest for salvation and his
inability to find it. The quest is developed around two

23 Pettet, p. 196.

24 Georgia Christopher, "In Arcadia, Calvin: A
Study of Nature in Henry Vaughan," Studies in Philology,
themes. First is his spiritual regeneration and reunion with Christ, and second is his frustrating attempt to pass through the "veil" which keeps him from seeing and from knowing God. These themes are bound together by natural images which do not simply depict the Welsh Countryside, nor are they images of an emotional recollection of Wordsworthian daffodils; rather, they unfold the way to a life with the divine. Vaughan looks at nature as a teacher which provides many lessons to be understood only by men who have opened their hearts to Christ. As Hutchinson sees it, "Vaughan's conception of the world is in direct constant relationship not only with God and man, earth and heaven, the living and the departed, but also the whole of creation, both animate and inanimate, in the great chime and symphony of nature."25

What moves Vaughan's poetry to greatness is his awareness of the delicate juxtaposition of opposites in creation. He incorporates polarities in his metaphorical language which transforms images from natural phenomena into supernatural realities. These images progress from the primary polarities of the stony heart turned to flesh in the frontispiece to more abstract and subtle contrasting metaphors--day and night, fire and rain, infertility and fertility--which appear later in the volume.

The opening poems of Book One celebrate the poet's spiritual rebirth. In "Regeneration" the poet calls his

heart without new faith his "frosty heart" and chooses to contrast it with "the warmth and splendor of nature during high spring" or life with the knowledge of Christ. The nature metaphor is carried through to the poem's conclusion where Vaughan asks:

\[
\text{Lord, then said I, on me one breath,} \\
\text{And let me dye before my death!}
\]

(p. 142, ll. 81-82)

Death-in-life is a well-known Christian motif that assigns the cyclical rebirth in nature to the death and resurrection of Christ. Vaughan uses this theme in the poems "Death," "Resurrection and Immortality," and "Judgment Day." This regenerative imagery becomes more subtle when it is used in later poems like "The Evening Watch".

\[
\text{Farewell! I goe to sleep, but when} \\
\text{The day-star springs, I'le wake agen.}
\]

(p. 177, ll. 1-2.)

Here the poet says good night to life and imagines the "day-star" to be the light of Christ which greets him in Paradise. Light imagery as it is contrasted with darkness also shows Vaughan's discovery of God's presence. Such is the case in "The Lampe":

\[
\text{'Tis dead night about: Horrour doth creepe} \\
\text{And move on the shades; stars nod, and sleepe,} \\
\text{And through the dark aire spin a firie thread} \\
\text{Such as doth gild the lazie glow-worms bed.}
\]

(p. 157, ll. 1-4.)

This fire-like image of stars shooting across the black sky is an accounting of God, who, the poet says, is the source of all life.
Thy light is Charity; Thy heat is Zeale;  
And thy aspiring, active fires reveale  
Devotion still on wing . . .  

(p. 158, ll. 11-13.)

In other poems, the image of stars juxtaposed against a sea of blackness is used by Vaughan to illustrate his passionate desire to be "saved" by God. In the poem "Midnight" Vaughan discovers the light of God in the heavens while surrounded by the darkness of night. He describes the experience in this passage:

Thy heav'n's (some say)  
Are a firie-liquid light,  
Which mingling aye  
Streames, and flames thus to the sight.  
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.  
O what bright quicknes,  
Active brightnes.  
And celestial flowes  
Will follow after  
On that water,  
Which thy spirit blewes!  

(p. 172, ll. 17-32.)

The speaker's description of "firie-liquid" is his interpretation of God's power which is working even at night. What he desires is for God to come to him and quicken his soul with the water of Baptism. This stanza combines the Biblical teaching found in Matthew 3:9 with falling rain. This passage suggests the stanza recreates the falling fire which turns to rain and restores nature, but can also restore the heart of a penitent sinner. In "The Shower" Vaughan repeats this regenerative
theme; but here he uses the metaphor of infertility to emphasize how sinners will not find salvation unless they turn to God with love in their hearts, and praise for his creation. For only then will God provide "sunshine after the rain."

Consistent in Vaughn is his use of mystical metaphor to emphasize the immediate rejuvenating experience. Even in his darkest moment such as "Silence and Stealth of dayes! 'tis now," where he conceptualizes the loneliness he feels after his brother's death, he says he can find comfort knowing he has "one pearl." This pearl is the teaching of the Bible and Christ, which gives him the power to change the way he sees all things.

And is the Heart of Earth and night
Find Heaven, and thee.
(p. 178, l. 31-32.)

Despite Vaughan's praise of the regeneration process and the joy he feels in nature, he apparently experiences an internal pulling which stretches him between two poles: on one side is his intellectual soul reaching for heaven, and on the other is his sinful body which draws him to earth. This polarity prevents him from seeing God. Ironically, perhaps, Vaughan realizes this "veil" is the burden of humanity, and he knows he carries not just original sin, but her personal sins as well. This issue is best illustrated in "The Retreate." Here the speaker reflects on the
innocent visions of his childhood where his "white, celestial thought" let him glimpse of God's bright face. He then recounts the experience:

When on some gilded Cloud, or flowre
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;

(p. 169, ll. 11-14.)

Although his experience is only with the shadows of truth, his youthful eye provided him at least one glimpse of the Divine which is what he is denied as he grows older.

The veil theme is first introduced in "Resurrection and Immortality" by the phrase, "them that here saw darkly in a glass." This Biblical metaphor juxtaposes seeing with blindness. The glass which aids vision allows the speaker to see "darkly." Presumably his sight is of the veil, not the Divine. Vaughan's search through darkness is a prominent theme of poems like "The World," "The Lampe," "The Morning Watch," and seems to culminate in "Vanity of Spirit." This poem tells how the speaker, after a restless sleep, awoke to search through the night for divine truth. First, he searches the beauties of nature: "her wombe, her bosome, and her head, Where all her secrets lay a bed" (ll. 11-12). Then he turns to himself, where he finds some small streams whose echo from the "eternal hills" gives him sight. Through the moonlight he sees:

A piece of much antiquity,
With Hyerogliphicks quite dismemberd,
And broken letters scarce rememberd.
I tooke them up, and (much Joy'd) went about
T' unite those peeces, hoping to find out
The mystery; but this neer done,
That little light I had was gone;
It grieved me much . . .
(p. 168, ll. 22-29.)

Vaughan realizes he cannot see through the veil; he is a
mortal and therefore not worthy of this passage.

At last
"Since in these veysls my eclips'd eye
May not approach thee, (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?)
I'le disapparell, and to buy
But one half glaunce, most gladly dye."
(p. 168, ll. 29-33.)

Many poems reiterate a desire to pass over into death.
Some, like the companion poems, "The Relapse," "The
Resolve," and "The Pursuit," also focus on the fallibility
of man and his susceptibility to sin, and attribute sin-
ning to his inability to see God. Vaughan's quest for God
is continually thwarted. However, he is never discouraged
but continues to search for God by observing Him at work
in nature where he hopes to gain knowledge and a greater
insight. As the poet explains in "I walk't the other day"
he finds a momentary peace when he looks at creation.
Pettet comments that Vaughan's metaphorical use of nature in
this particular poem is a passionate account of a personal
experience.26 In the colloquy, the speaker tells of the
revelation he experienced when he saw a "recluse" become
restored after resting in nature. What the speaker recalls
is metaphorical because what he experiences is precisely what
26Pettet, p. 54.
he hopes his reader has felt while reading this and other of his poems. It is, therefore, appropriate that this sophisticated adaptation of his original theme should appear at the conclusion of the volume. Even more significant is the poem's concluding plea for God's mercy. This enables the book to conclude not with a celebration of the poet's regenerated heart, but with a heart which has been burdened by the curse which is all man's, and known only to those who actively sought to find God in this life.

What we must appreciate in the closing of Book One is how Vaughan sees himself as a part of God's divine plan. Vaughan knows he has fallen from grace and chooses to turn to nature so he can learn from her. For she too has fallen, and she too shares his hope for regeneration and salvation.

In Book One, Vaughan is not the nature poet he becomes in Book Two. In this earlier volume he uses nature as a means to a greater end, closeness with God. As Pettet explains:

It is unlikely that he would ever regard himself, in any notable way, as a poet of nature. Nature-poetry demands -- among other qualities -- a richness and vitality of sensuous response that he never possessed or, more probably, that he curbed and smothered. It also demands a love of earth such as he felt only fugitively and was often inclined to reject altogether.27

27 Pettet, p. 98.
Vaughan's true praise of nature does not develop until the second volume. In this later work the narrator begins to see himself as part of nature. He praises her by using natural images like pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope to reflect divine light while he choreographs a delicate and colorful ballet of creation. This ballet of nature is animated by the presence of the Divine and consequently becomes a source of divine truths. By the conclusion of this volume, we are made aware that nature has taught Vaughan to accept the burden of humanity and to live at peace with the veil he attempted to penetrate in Volume one.
The Veiled Spirit

A prominent theme in *Silex Scintillans* is Vaughan's account of his personal struggle to see the Divine. This desire is continually thwarted by the presence of a veil which exists between the poet and his God. In the first volume Vaughan strives for passage through this veil by wishing for death, which ultimately will take him to God in heaven. This desired death is a major theme in poems like "Vanity of Spirit" and Regeneration."

In the second volume the subject of death is less prominent, and the veil which divides man from the Divine takes on an additional significance. Horace Underwood explains this veil, and Vaughan's desire for passage through it, not as Vaughan's plea for death but as his desire to experience the coming of Christ.1 Certainly this is the significance Vaughan gives his image in Volume Two.

Other critics define the veil differently. Judith Richardson explains the veil as a "matter which darkens God's light and causes man to live in the shadows."2


2 Judith Richardson, *DA*. Other poems in Volume Two which include the image of the veil are: "Vain Wits and Eyes," "They have all gone into the world of Light,"
Sharon Seelig concludes that nature is the mask between God and the poet. Thomas Calhoun, who writes in agreement with Leishman and Allen, contends the veil in Vaughan is never penetrable. Therefore, Vaughan's hope for salvation and his desire for true union with God can only happen after his death. In Volume Two, this is not the case, and to understand how Vaughan redefines the veil in this book we must look closely at the poetry.

In "The Night," Vaughan addresses the question of passage to the Divine. By the conclusion of the poem he has discovered how he can experience God during his lifetime. The poem is constructed on the paradox of light and dark images and has been criticized for its contradictions. The opening stanza introduces the major themes of the poem: the veil between God and man and the Christian hope for


spiritual renewal. These themes work around the Biblical story of Nicodemus as it is found in John 3:1.

This passage tells how Nicodemus visited Jesus at night. During their exchange, Christ revealed to him the fundamental truths of Christian thought: "unless a man be born again of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Vaughan begins to retell Nicodemus' vigil in the opening lines of the poem.

Through the pure Virgin-shrine,
That sacred vail drawn o'r thy glorious noon
That men might look and live
As Glo-worms shine,
And face the Moon:
(p. 323, pp. 1-3.)

The final couplet establishes the relationship between the Biblical passage and Vaughan's poem.

Wise Nicodemus saw such light
As made him know his God by night.
(p. 323, ll. 4-5.)

As Vaughan recounts the story, the light which Nicodemus saw becomes the fulcrum which balances Nicodemus' literal visitation with Christ against the speaker's desire to see Christ and pass through the veil into Divine light.

The stanza opens with Vaughan's interpretation of God appearing as light passing through a "Virgin Shrine." The reference to virgin alludes to the Virgin Mary in whom the son of God became flesh. In line two, this shrine is also the "sacred vail" drawn over the "glorious noon." The O.E.D.

5 Pettet, p. 142.
defines "veil" as "a gratuity given to someone in an inferior position." Thus, Christ was a gift from God to man; he is the veil and God becomes the "glorious noon." Likewise, because man is mortal he has been denied sight of God the true light. Instead, he must be content with the shadows of truth. Man therefore is like the glow-worm who lives facing the light of the moon which, for the purpose of this metaphor, is Christ. The imagery in this stanza lends itself to much criticism.

A. W. Rudrum concludes the images "noon, moon, light, and night" coalesce around the "shadowy figure of Christ" who then is the major figure in the poem. Durr also finds Christian teaching in the poem, and attributes the speaker's use of reflective light to be a platonic explanation of the Christian theme. Durr contends Christ was a gift to man through whom man could behold "God's Majesty and live." (Exodus 33:20.) "As the direct light of the sun would quench the glow-worms feeble and inconsistent flicker, so would the direct and noonday revelation of Divinity extinguish man's sight and intermittent light." This interpretation is appropriate because it considers the neoplatonic

6 Pettet, p. 143.


images which are the basis for Vaughan's metaphor for Christ. Christ is the son of God and also the reflection of God's true light.

The opening thrust of the poem begins the movement of its nine stanzas which crescendo and decrescendo with the speaker's alliteration and metaphor. The theme of this poem is choreographed by its melodic texture. For instance, in line seven, Nicodemus is described as "Most Best Believer." This use of alliteration accents the heavy stress sounds so that the reader is forced to slow down in order to articulate the repeating "B" sounds. The decrescendoing effect continues with the speaker's appositive to Believer:

Who in the land of darkness and blinde eyes
Thy long-expected healing wings could see,
When thou didst rise;
And what can never more be done,
(p. 323, ll. 8-11.)

The poem continues its "ritardano" when the final line accentuates Nicodemus' spiritual strength with the addition of the paradox which captured Vaughan's poetic imagination. Nicodemus is "Best Believer" because he believed when the "blinde eyes" did not. What is more impressive, he saw Christ and heard his truth when the sun was both literally and figuratively at its furthest point from the earth. I say this because it is night and the earth obviously is
turned from the sun, but also because humanity had turned
its back to Christ. 9

Another example of Vaughan's use of alliteration is in
line thirty-one. In the phrase "God's silent searching
flight," the repeating "S" sounds have an onomatopoic
effect which create a swishing sensation as we read and
imagine the supreme being gliding weightlessly through the
clouded darkness. Pettet says we can feel the motion in
Vaughan's poem: "Its fluidity and notable weightlessness
produced by terminating lines with two speaking stresses." 10

But His own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone;
(p. 323, 11. 21-22.)

This pattern is repeated throughout the poem, giving the
stanzas continuity though their rhyme schemes vary. The
changing rhythms and rhymes combined with the changing pace
give a musical quality which is set in motion by the poet's
nocturnal search for Christian truth.

Structurally the poem is molded on the Ignatian style
of Meditation. 11 As was already discussed, the first
stanza acts to set the scene for the meditation which

9 Hutchinson, pp. 109-126, writes of the effect that
the Puritan Regime had on Henry Vaughan and the Church of
Wales.

10 Pettet, p. 140.

11 Martz, pp. 23-24, describes seventeenth-century
meditation. Also Pettet, p. 153, agrees he defines stanzas
1-4 as the composition—a strong visualization of the Bible
text; stanzas 5-9, the analysis; and the last two lines of
the poem the colloquy.
follows. In this instance the setting is night and the subject is Nicodemus' visit with God. The second stanza continues to recreate this experience, and the third through eighth are used for his formal meditation on night. In the concluding stanza, Vaughan does not experience a colloquy with God. Instead, he imagines what a mystical union with Him would be like. These three segments provide a framework for the speaker's systemized but humble ascent to God. The nine stanza structure acts as a metaphoric image of the speaker's journey through the nine spheres of the universe, through the veil, and to the throne of God. As he journeys upward through these spheres, we are struck not with his spiritual ascent to heaven, but with his attempt to discover God's throne in nature. Stanzas four through seven tell biblical stories which change Vaughan's search for God from heaven to Earth, which, in turn, makes the speaker's desired passage through the veil an earthly experience.

In the third stanza the speaker begins his formal meditation on night with this question:

Oh who will tell me, where  
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!  
(p. 323, 11. 13-14.)

His purpose is to answer this question during the course of his meditation. What is emphasized again is Vaughan's continued insistence to mention the night as the time when Nicodemus saw Christ. The conclusion of this stanza
answers part of the poet's question by informing the reader where Christ appeared to Nicodemus.

What hallow'd solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower,
Within whose sacred leafs did lie
The fulness of the Deity.
(p. 323, 11. 15-18.)
This flower is more than Christ. It holds the Divine in its petals which means that Nicodemus has passed through the veil that Vaughan cannot. The poet explains Nicodemus is at one with God, and Christ, as well as the recipient of Divine truth. Furthermore, the flower, now illuminated by the "fulness of the Deity," depicts God in an earthly garden and not in the "mercy seat" as it is mentioned in Exodus 25:17. Vaughan's placement of the Divine in nature allows him to look to earth with the hope that he too may see God in nature or feel his presence in a flower.

In the fourth stanza Vaughan describes how creation, that is "the trees and herbs" did watch and peep, and wonder while "the jews did sleep." Friedenreich comments that it is important for Vaughan to see nature reacting to God, because Vaughan sees himself as a part of nature. He therefore can identify with it and the possibility for his own mystical union with the Deity. But it is not only nature who sees. Ultimately it is nature and men like Nicodemus, the believer, who are given this opportunity. Vaughan's hope for such a visitation is contingent on his

12 Freidenreich, p. 133.
becoming a "Best Believer." However, Nicodemus' experience also implies that there is a way for Vaughan to experience, see, or perhaps feel, God's presence during his lifetime. The problem, of course is that Vaughan is too humble; he believes he does not have enough faith and, therefore, renders himself unworthy of such a visitation from God. The poem, however, makes room for modesty and loss of faith. It employs dark imagery, which represents spiritual darkness as well as the advent of Christian renewal. This theme is mentioned in the fifth stanza where Vaughan's praise of night reaches a spiritual climax.

Dear night! this worlds defeat;  
The stop to busie fools; cares check and curb;  
The day of Spirits; my souls calm retreat  
Which none disturb!  
Christ's progress, and prayer time;  
(p. 324, 11. 25-29.)

Like Nicodemus the speaker comes to see the darkness of night alive with the promised light of Christian day. In this passage Vaughan explains that ordinary men cannot see or hear the spirits from heaven because they are men of little faith. He excludes himself from this category not because he sees in the darkness but because his faith allows him to anticipate the arrival of Christ in his life.

The final lines of this passage deal specifically with Christ's progress on earth. Vaughan footnoted these lines with his own gloss (Mark 1:35 and Luke 21:37). The first biblical reference recalls how Christ cast out demons by night, and the second tells that he chose to sleep beneath
The Mount of Olives on those troubled nights before Passover. Vaughan must have thought it important to bring to mind Christ's night vigils of prayer. Perhaps his intention was to emphasize that God came to him at night as well. As illustrated, several stanzas of this poem relate a biblical story about God working in nature and most specifically about him coming to man at night. As the poem progresses, Vaughan comes closer to the possibility that he too might see God.

In stanza six the poet imagines how Christ might come to man by night. He uses a passage from the "Song of Solomon" which describes the biblical persona looking for his lover to illustrate how Christ also wanders about the night in search of his wayward love (Man). When the passage is read, Christ becomes the lover whose locks are "wet with the dews of night," and it is Christ whose "still soft voice" is not heard by sinning souls.

The meaning of this stanza is that Vaughan wants Christ to come to him by night and ravish his soul in the same way he did Nicodemus'. The poem concludes with a plea to God to let Him know that the poet will open his heart for the "still small voices" of the night.

At this point Vaughan takes time to reflect on his present life. He begins the seventh stanza with the image of himself living under a veiled darkness.
Were all my loud, evil dayes
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some angels wing or voice
Is seldom rent;
(p. 324, ll. 37-40.)
The image of darkness refers to the darkness of night which in the Renaissance is meant to be a private time with God. Thus, Vaughan writes he wants his peaceful darkness to be interrupted by the voice of an angel. However, Vaughan's image of this veiled darkness is the figurative cloud which exists outside his heart. He desires that this veil be penetrated by the wing of an angel, who in turn will open his heart to receive the spirit of God to quicken him.

The stanza concludes with a look at the future. He says if I were in "heaven all the long year," I would never have left it as Christ did. The image itself is a metaphor which depicts the speaker's desire to attain felicity by gaining entrance into heaven. But the metaphor also alludes to the speaker's desire to experience the mystical union that Nicodemus did, and in turn be shown the way with Christ while living on this earth. In both definitions the speaker, of course, would never desire to come back to earthly sinful existence.

Before imagining what his passage through the veil would be like, the speaker ponders his predicament as a mortal. In this woeful stanza he explains he is destined to live where the earthly sun wakes and feeds all things. This is only the indirect sun, and the shadow of truth. The paradox
is completed when the poet concedes to his mortality. He says, he too runs "to ev'ry myre." For even though he knows to follow in the way of truth, he still is caught by earthly concern. He adds:

\[
\text{And by this worlds ill-guiding light,} \\
\text{Erre more than I can do by night.}
\]

(p. 324, pp. 47-48.)

Meaning, in the daylight of this world, he makes more mistakes in finding his way than he could at night, which is God's time. By the conclusion of this stanza, the speaker has reduced himself to the point where he appears to be the penitent sinner worthy of salvation and spiritual renewal. The concluding lines drift with the poet's thoughts of what it would be like to experience the mystical union Nicodemus did.

Much has been written about this final stanza. Elizabeth Holmes explains that the stanza "expresses Vaughan's fundamental desire to unite himself with the divine."\(^{13}\) Durr agrees with Holmes, and supports her contention with other poems like "Regeneration," which show the poet's desire to enter into a union with God after death.\(^{14}\) E. C. Pettet elaborates on the concept of mystical union with the Divine. He calls the final stanza "a tribute

\(^{13}\) Holmes, p. 56.  
\(^{14}\) Durr, p. 40.
to night" because Vaughan idealizes it as heaven. Pettet further explains deep dazzling darkness to be Vaughan's mystical awareness of God which Vaughan does not claim to have experienced. Pettet bases this contention on the ambiguity in the phrase, "some say," which implies Vaughan does not know. Pollard exaggerates this ambiguity. He explains the words "some say" illustrate Vaughan's "divided consciousness." "One cannot," says Pollard, "be both invisible and dim . . ." He adds, "this renunciation of invisibility makes Vaughan hesitate and so he totters on the brink, afraid to give himself entirely to God.

But is Pollard correct? Is the conclusion of the poem a sudden reversal? Does he deny himself the mystical union with God that he longed for in the body of the poem? Or, does Vaughan see himself as no better than the rest of humanity, who must also wait? In the opening lines of this stanza Vaughan explains God as appearing to some to have in Him a deep dazzling darkness. This means God cannot be seen and what Vaughan knows of God's image is based on what "some say." It holds, then, that men who "see not clear" must accept God and live their lives by faith. Therefore,

15 Pettet, p. 152.
16 Pettet, p. 152.
it follows that the poem does conclude with the speaker's plea to God to restore his faith, which in turn will enable him to lift the veil and let in the spirit when it comes to him by night. Thus, he too will experience the mystical union with the Divine.

To say that Vaughan denied himself a possible union with God is to presume that he is not a humble man who leaves his life in the hands of God. If there is one consistent theme in Silex Scintillans it is Vaughan's continued vision of himself as a sinner, burdened with the curse of original sin who is always willing to accept his fate. Likewise, Vaughan often refers to himself as a man of faith who journeys on this earth in search of God to restore his wayward and imperfect heart. Throughout this volume, Vaughan says many times he is ready to be "born again," and he is willing to lift the veil which separates his troubled heart from a union with God, so he too may live "invisible" in Him as well as a part of His "dim light" which is Christ.

"The Night" is not the only poem which Vaughan speaks of passing through the veil as an earthly experience. There are several other poems which show Vaughan's new calmness about the greater veil which he struggled so hard to pass through in Volume One. Vaughan's interpretation of the veil as something he has constructed over his own unworthy heart, is the veil he can penetrate during his life.

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Similarly, it is through this veil that the word of God can pass during the rebirth of the soul. Regardless of how permeable this veil may become for the poet there always exists a greater veil between the Divine and man. This veil cannot be penetrated by anyone during his lifetime. However, because Vaughan has discovered that experiencing Christ during this life is indeed in the realm of human experience, he has learned to live content beneath the greater veil. His acceptance of his mortality is the major theme of "The Feast."

O drink and bread
Which strikes death dead,
The food of man's immortal being!
Under veys here
Thou art my chear,
Present and sure without my seeing.
(p. 340, ll. 37-42.)

In this passage the Communion act enables the speaker to feel closer to Christ. This act helps him to experience God's presence without seeing Him and to strengthen his faith without hearing God's voice.

In other poems Vaughan writes of ways to survive in the absence of Divine light, and how to live a life of blind faith. Consider the theme from "Righteousness" where Vaughan tells us to walk not by sight but by faith. "Praise creation" he says, and "bear our cross with joy." The cross we bear is our inability to see God in this lifetime. Likewise, the joy we feel is the knowledge of God which comes through the life and teachings of Christ. For it is true
joy which Vaughan experiences in poems like "The Water-fall" and "The dwelling place" when he feels God's presence in nature. And it is joy which he experiences in "The Night" when he writes, "Dear night" in praise of God who is always present in the embodiment of his Son, Christ.

Vaughan's discovery that God is present on earth and can be seen by the faithful appears in the poem, "Cock-crowing." Vaughan begins the poem with the description of the cock which inspired him to write. He explains he desires to know more about this bird of light which, Don Cameron Allen says, becomes the way through which Vaughan learns of his own soul's flight to God.\(^\text{18}\) The Cock, says Vaughan:

\begin{quote}
\ldots
gains, as if it knew
The path unto the house of light.
\end{quote}

(p. 276, ll. 9-10.)

Later in the poem Vaughan describes the bird's ability to fly as a way for him to get closer to God. He asks that his soul also be given this ability. But, this would only happen if he could remove the veil before his heart.

\begin{quote}
Onely this Veyle which thou has broke,
And must be broke yet in me.
\end{quote}

(p. 277, ll. 37-38.)

In these lines Vaughan uses the image of the veil in the Old Testament (Cor 13:16), which is done away with in the coming of Christ, as a metaphor for the veil over his own

\(^\text{18}\) Allen, p. 95.
heart. He believes this veil can also disappear when God sends the Divine spirit to him to brush his soul with God's light.

...that I
May shine unto a perfect day,
And warm me at thy glorious Eye!
O take it off! or till it flee,
Though wit no Lilie stay with me!
(p. 277, ll. 44-48.)

The poem concludes with Vaughan's prayer for God to remove the veil and renew him. But, if this veil cannot be removed during his lifetime he asks, instead, that God stay with him until death, when he will pass through the greater veil before heaven.

There are other poems which add to this new dimension of the veil. For instance, in "They are all gone into the world of light," Vaughan celebrates Christian renewal by using imagery of light. The poem is based on his vision of friends' souls living in heaven. He complains his heart is too clouded from lack of faith to allow him to see God as they do. This is why, in line fifteen, the poem builds to a climax.

O holy hope! and high humility,
High as the Heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have shew'd them to me
To kindle my cold love,
(p. 271, ll. 13-16.)

The speaker's love is cold because he does not feel God. The passage refers to Vaughan's description of heaven as it is imagined in the first stanza. His vision, he says,
was given to him that he might live a more passionate life with God. The stanza reminds us of the frontispiece published with Volume One of *Silex Scintillans* in 1650.

In this emblem the poet's face is etched over the picture of his own stony heart struck soft by God's quickening fire. His troubled eyes seem to call to his God to renew his faith and show him the ways of the righteous.¹⁹ This emblem depicts the theme of regeneration which is dominant in Volume One. Its absence in the 1655 edition is appropriate; because the major theme of this volume is Vaughan's hope to lift the veil over his heart so Christ can come in. In the earlier collection of poems Vaughan explains how God came to him by surprise and softened his hard heart. In the second, Vaughan sees himself as the active participant in his own salvation. He believes he can lift the veil so God can quicken his heart.

Vaughan's new understanding of the veil is, in a way, ironic. He longed for passage through the veil which prevented God from entering his heart, so he too could fall into the dazzling darkness where he would experience a mystical union with the Divine. But, nowhere in his poetry is there any mention of such an experience. For

many are called and few are chosen (Matthew 22:14).

"Vaughan must have heard 'the still small voice.' He must have felt the knocking in the night . . . and sought to open fully to Him. Wishing, I suppose that his 'glow-worm' light might be engulfed in the light transcendent. After all, he had made his hard nocturnal pilgrimage, but we do not know that he ever arrived home."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20} Durr, p. 42.
Water and Rebirth

The central theme of *Silex Scintillans* is Vaughan's own Christian renewal. Vaughan's preoccupation with spiritual regeneration is frequently depicted by water and by the Christian significance which can be given to such liquids as tears, streams, fountains, and waterfalls. Vaughan shows how water affects all of nature. He explains that the special properties of water are its power to cleanse man of his sins and to restore life to nature. Because water is a viable part of the life process, Vaughan says its origin is heaven and its participation on earth is an act of God. As Vaughan explains, God determines the good and bad effects which water has on nature's delicate balance.

Like other seventeenth-century poets, Vaughan was influenced by a system of order, which is best illustrated by Ulysses' speech on order and decree in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Ulysses' speech implies there is an ideal order which animates an earthly order; and when this

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1 Garner, p. 23, refers to E. M. Tillyard, *Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943). Tillyard defines the Elizabethan way of looking at things. 'One can say dogmatically,' he says (p.2), 'that it was still solidly theocentric and that it was a simplified version of a much more complicated medieval picture.' Garner systematically puts Vaughan's poetry into Tillyard's five sets of ideas of Elizabethan Age.
scheme is thrown off balance, chaos results. In "The Bird" Vaughan uses water imagery to create a pastoral setting and transmit a feeling of peace on earth.

So hills and valleys into singing break,
And though poor stones have neither speech nor tongue,
While active winds and streams both run and speak,
Yet stones are deep in admiration.
Thus Praise and Prayer here beneath the Sun. . .
(p. 288, 11. 13-17.)

These lines show how Vaughan imagines the universe in balance as all things praise their maker. The murmuring stream praises nature and provides her with water necessary for life. Just as water evokes peace in nature, its absence causes discord. In "The Jews," Vaughan uses the metaphor of a frozen heart to talk of life without the knowledge of Christ.

When the fair year
Of your deliverer comes,
And that long frost which now benums
Your hearts shall thaw; . . .
Angels here
Shall yet to man appear
And familiarly confer
Beneath the Oke and Juniper;
When the bright Dove
Which now these many, many springs
Hath kept above,
Shall with spread wings
Descend, and the living waters flow
To make drie dust, and dead trees grow;
(p. 291, 11. 1-14.)

In this passage, the lack of water suggests that the universe is out of balance. Similarly, the absence of Christ meant the world was also out of balance. Furthermore, the power given to Christ in this passage is the same as water. Water restores life; likewise, Christ forgives the sins of
man and restores man's "benumbed" heart to the light of God. The restoring and destructive powers of water as well as its consequential effects on man and nature is one of the primary image patterns in *Silex Scintillans*.

Probably the most important role which water plays in *Silex Scintillans* is its influence on the poet himself. Certainly the external effects are obvious, as is its effect on the life cycle. For Vaughan works his own philosophy of spiritual renewal around the cyclical process of nature. He takes from Christianity the belief that each living thing is born with a seed which was given to them by God. He says, in "Disorder and Frailty,":

That seed, which thou
in me didst sow,
(p. 202, 11. 53-54.)

This seed contains the knowledge of its creator as well as a conscience which can lead man to the way of righteousness. However, Vaughan adds this thought to the Christian idea: as we grow, the seed which God planted in us becomes dormant; thus, it loses its influence on our lives. Vaughan explains the process of this seed in the poem, "The Seed Growing Secretly."

The theme of this poem takes its departure from the parable of the Mustard Seed in Mark 4:6, which reads, if a seed be on good soil then it will grow and flourish. Vaughan writes the poem as a meditation on his own spiritual development. He prays that his seed may grow like those sown
on good soil and not like the others who do not grow because they were sewn among thrones or on rock soil. In the second stanza he dramatizes this metaphor,

My dew, my dew! early love,
My soul's bright food, thy absence kills!
Hover not long, eternal Dove!
Life without thee is loose and spills

(p. 308, ll. 5-8.)

The absence of water in Vaughan's life indicates the loss of knowledge about God and the Christian consciousness he longs for. The poem continues with a description of the process of man's spiritual development as he moves away from the innocence of childhood into the corrupt world. Vaughan concerns himself with the need for man to withdraw from the world of sin into nature, where he can enjoy rebirth in Christian regeneration.

Friedenreich writes, "The Seed Growing Secretly" advocates country life as opposed to city dwelling. The poet plainly suggests, "out-dwellers are more receptive to Christ; their lives are styled in a manner which allows for greater receptivity." The opening lines support this contention.

If this world's friends might see but once
What some poor man may often feel,
Glory, and gold, and Crowns and Thrones
They would soon quit and learn to kneel.

(p. 308, ll. 1-4.)

Vaughan himself was once a sinner and a city dweller. The poem recounts his transformation and attributes it to a seed inside his soul which survived the tempests of sin and lack

2 Friedenreich, p. 154.
of faith. He explains that as he grew older and took on the sins of the world he became "sickly and slow." Now as a man he asks God to help him to regenerate the seed. "O spred wings and shake / One living drop! one drop life keeps." These drops of living water come from God's eternal wells and can turn his dry soul into "greenness."

Dear, secret Greeness! nurst below Tempests and windes, and winter-nights, Vex not, that but one sees thee grow, That One made all these lesser lights.  

(p. 309, 11. 25-28.)

The greenness of the growing mustard seed repeats the Christian theme of rebirth. Furthermore, the growing seed is a metaphor for the speaker's increasing knowledge of God. This insight gives a new dimension to the speaker's experience. His praise of nature brings him closer to God's light; this closeness is all he needs to know the way to truth. Vaughan explains that he recognizes to ask for more knowledge than a mortal is entitled to, is to commit the sin of Hybris. He chooses to illustrate his desire to know God in terms of a veiled glass which prevents him from seeing Divine light. "Who breaks his glass to take more light,/Makes way for storms into his rest." In these lines, Vaughan expresses the need for humans to remain in their assigned positions in the natural order of things.

The speaker's final thoughts repeat the doctrine of salvation and places emphasis on the importance of Christian humility. The poem concludes that the seed inside all men
grows quietly and, when nourished by water from heaven, will flourish until "the white winged reapers come" at the time of death.

The nourished seed ties all creation to its creator and draws man to praise God's world. Throughout his poetry Vaughan reflects the cycle of his seed, its death and recovery portray nature's circular regenerative process. Vaughan's world is kinetic: its natural elements knit and unknit; dust overflows; darkness hatches light buds; hills melt and smoke. All this can be attributed to the properties of water which weaves its way, carrying the theme of Christian renewal through the second volume of *Silex Scintillans*. Often, as in the first volume, this renewal is explained almost exclusively in terms of the speaker's regenerated soul; the seed born again through "water and the spirit" of baptism (John, 3:5). However, in the second volume Vaughan comes to feel a part of nature; he sees the power of God as it communicates to him through the processes of water. Thus, water is not entirely symbolic in Book Two; it is also its natural self.

Water is dominant in this volume: tears of forgiveness fall from heaven, streams of life restore desolate land, and voices are heard from the waterfall. Water moves with the power of its creator. It ties the dead to the living and gives new life to the dying. Only once in "The Water-fall" does it pause to die and even then only briefly before falling into paradise.

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Water appears in a variety of images. The smallest are tears which sometimes are associated with humility and innocence of childhood where man enjoys a closeness with God.

Dear, harmless age! the short, swift span,
Where weeping virtue parts with man;
Where love without lust dwells and bends
What way we please, without self-ends.
("Childe-hood," p. 321, 11. 31-34.)

In "Childe-hood," the poet's view of passing from youth to adulthood is understood as a time when he lost touch with God and took on the sins of "business" and "worldly pleasures." Thus, the "weeping virtue" in line thirty-two represents a child's humility. Childhood is, he says:

An age of mysteries! Which he
Must live twice, that would God's face see;
Which angels guard, and with it play.
Angels! which foul men drive away.
(p. 322, 11. 35-38.)

The poem concludes, as man grows older he sins, and the seed inside him lies dormant until he is born again as a "child of God." Furthermore, the love and "weeping virtue" of a child give him hope to see the light of God's divine truth.

Tears of childhood are similar to those shed by the poet-speaker when he asks God to help him write in poems like "Begging" and "Anguish." In "Anguish" the speaker says he will "weep blood . . . if thou wilt give that art of writing true unfeigned verse." Tears show sincerity in Vaughan, and when shed by a penitent sinner they open the sinner's heart to the waters of salvation. As an example, in
"St. Mary Magdalen" the speaker envies Mary's "Art of Tears." He says her sighs show true humility, for she came to Christ as his servant. The speaker asks, "Why art thou humbled thus, and low / As earth, thy lovely head dost bow?" (11. 25-26.) He does not answer; instead he retells the story of Mary's anointing Christ's feet with oil. As the poem continues, it twists the role of healer from Mary to Christ. For it was "His blood that was shed to heal our sins." This "healing balm" is the "Divine restorative" which saves Mary from her sinning.

Odorous ointments kept with care,  
And dearly bought, (when thou didst see  
They could not cure, nor comfort thee,)  
Like a wise, early Penitent  
Thou sadly didst to him present,  
Whose interceding, meek and calm  
Blood, is the worlds all-healing Balm.  
(p. 304, 11. 34-40.)

The washing imagery at the end of the poem retells the story of baptism and emphasizes the restorative power of water. "Go, Leper, Go" says the speaker, "wash in the River Jorden till thy flesh comes like a child's, spotless and fresh." (p. 304, 11. 69-70.) This passage is based on the story of Naaman who was cured of leprosy when he washed in the River Jorden (2 Kings 5:14). The poem's final address is directed at all men that they may have the tears of Mary who seeks divine love and opens her heart to the teachings of Christ to be born again.
Consistent in these poems is God's unfailing power of forgiveness which accompanies the "weeping heart." In the "Jesus Weeping I" poem, Vaughan unites Christ's tears with spiritual renewal.

Dear Jesus, weep on! pour this latter Soul-quick'ning rain, this living water On their dead hearts; but (O my fears!) They will drink blood, that despise tears. My dear, bright Lord! My Morning-star! Shed this live-dew on fields which far From hence long for it! Shed it there, Where the starv'd earth groans for one tear!

(p. 296, l. 9-16.)

This passage reminds us of the tears Christ shed on the cross for those who persecuted Him. We are also made aware of the full cycle of man; his plea for salvation, his bent for sinning, and his chance to be forgiven again. This theme is coupled with nature's full cycle: life, death, and the promise of rebirth. In other poems, God's forgiveness is portrayed as rain. For instance, in "Psalm 104" rain is used to depict God's blessing. The speaker describes God's reservoir in this passage.

Thou from thy upper Springs above, from those Chambers of rain, where Heav'n's large bottles lie, Dost water the parch'd hills, whose breaches close Heal'd by the showers from high.

(p. 284, l. 37-40.)

God's love accompanies the rain. It is His love that rains on the grass to make it grow, so the cattle can eat; and it is His love that waters the stony earth so it will bring forth "wine and bread" for man. The metaphysics of this passage are two-fold. First, is the obvious reference
to the birth and resurrection of Christ, and second is the
equally apparent transfiguration which takes place during
the act of Communion. In this poem Vaughan has related
the growth of his own seed to the seed growing in nature.
God's love, which granted the fallen rain, shows forgiveness.
Furthermore, the Communion act, which is given by God (the
provider both of Christ and of wine) is the source of
nourishment for the narrator's seed. The poet speaks of
his dependence on God in the next stanza of the poem.

Thou send'st Thy Spirit forth, and they revive,
The frozen earths dead face Thou dost renew.
Thus Thou Thy glory through the world dost drive,
And to Thy works art true.

(p. 287, ll. 81-84.)

As this passage explains, God sends his spirit to earth; there
the spirit restores life to nature and lifts up the hearts of
men to receive the word of God. The poet believes that his
nourished seed enables him to see God at work in nature.

In Vaughan's world, rain is the elixir which restores
life to vegetation and to man. Vaughan also contends, how-
ever, that before the fall nature was not dependent on God
for rain. In "The Tempest," which appears in Book One,
Vaughan writes how nature was punished after the fall of man:

When nature on her bosome saw
Her infants die,
And all her flowers wither'd to straw
Her brest grown dry;

(p. 222, ll. 1-4.)

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Nature then wept and pleaded for God's mercy. His sure, mighty love restored her with the gift of "Waters that fall / chide, and fly up . . . Water's refin'd to motion . . ." In this poem God's restorative power teaches us of his unfailing forgiveness.

Vaughan illustrates how water acts as God's agent to instruct man in the ways of righteousness. For instance, in the poem "Abel's Blood," water undermines the consequences of the fall, and the speaker vividly recalls how the earth cried "murder" after the killing of Cain. In the opening passages, the speaker describes the earth cloaked in purple and red images of death. "Sad, purple well!" he remarks, as he looks deep into the center of earth's "bubbling eye."

Did first against a Murd'rer cry;
Whose streams still vocal, still complain
Of bloody Cain;
(p. 325, 11. 2-4.)
The description captures the motion of a stream which rushes from the center of the earth and colors the land with the blood of sin. Even the opening and closing of day is tainted by its memory.

And now at evening are as red
As in the morning when first shed.
(p. 325, 11. 5-6.)
Thus, the earth and man carry the sin, for man has continued to murder, as in the death of Christ. Man, the sinner, has not, says the speaker, sought God's salvation nor heard his threats to retribution; rather, he is caught in a tempest -51-
where sin must contend with conscience and the teachings of God. Simultaneous with the speaker's insistence of damnation is this offering of renewal.

But DEEP still calleth upon deep:
Whose urgent sound like unto that
Of many waters . . .
(p. 325, ll. 16-18.)

Fogle's notes make reference here to the voice of God on the water. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts," where man is reintroduced to the knowledge of God and salvation promised by the death of Christ. Thus, the image of water twists the theme of the poem from damnation to salvation as Abel's blood turns to that of Christ. When the poem draws to its conclusion, the speaker turns in prayer to ask God for His forgiveness and the return of pure water.

Just as man can ask God to restore the water, so he can ask Him to restore his heart. This doctrine of forgiveness and renewal is repeated throughout Volume II. Vaughan begins it with such an account of his own "icy heart" since transformed by blood and water,

Some drops of thy all quickening blood
Fell on my heart; and made it bud . . .
(p. 264, ll.)

The true flower of Vaughan's heart as it is generated from the mature seed happens in the confines of each poem. In "The Bird" and "Childe-hood" Vaughan discovers God's working in nature and he uses water imagery to retell what
he has learned in terms of his own regenerating experience. Sometimes Vaughan writes of his own tears of anguish and humility which help him to melt his icy heart and ask God for forgiveness. In other poems, like "Mary Magdalen," he explains how her humility opened her heart to receive God's forgiveness. Coupled with the penitent heart is the ever-present suggestion of baptism and the need for man to be born again, so as to restore the seed which God gave him at birth. Vaughan's experience with nature allows him to feel the presence of God in waters of the earth. In "Abel's Blood," he imagined that God spoke to man from the streams of the earth, but in "The Water-fall" his poetic genius and Christian conscience combine in a genuine interaction between God and nature.

"The Water-fall" is one of Vaughan's most complex poems, but it is also one where the reader feels not the tempest of a sinner seeking salvation but the calm of the faithful and the serenity of the now-wise poet. The poem is written as a formal meditation, reflecting the innermost thoughts of its author. As in many of his poems, the major theme here is renewal of the dying heart by the waters of baptism and the passage of man through regeneration into renewed life. Vaughan's meditation has a three-part structure. First is the speaker's preparation for meditation. Here he discovers the waterfall, decides to use it as the subject of his poem, and recreates what he sees in the
first stanza. The speaker's formal meditation does not come until the second stanza where he discusses the process of meditation and, at the same time, reveals the theme of his poem. The third part of the meditation comes at the end of the second stanza, where he tells the purpose of his meditation in a colloquy with God.  

In the first stanza of the poem the form and content work together. The structure of its lines images the architecture of the waterfall. When we examine this stanza we see three pools of water and two waterfalls. The first two lines of the poem, which are written in iambic pentameter and rhyme in couplets, establish the form which the speaker uses to illustrate pools of water. This pattern is repeated in lines five-six and lines eleven-twelve. The falls occur in lines three-four and lines six through nine. These lines are written in iambic diameter. Their shortened form offsets them from the other lines and allows them to flow easily from one line to the next. For instance, in these lines,

The common pass
Where, clear as glass,
(p. 343, ll. 7-8.)

the reader is permitted to pass from the first line to the comma, which appears in the second. This is the pattern for all the lines that represent the falling water. Even

though some lines may end with commas, their subject matter allows them to join the next in meaning.

The first two lines of the poem create its peaceful tone, similar to the opening lines of "The dwelling place." In both poems, the speaker sees the fountain or falls as a part of God's creation which for him is as meaningful as stained glass in a cathedral.

With what deep murmurs through times silent stealth
Doth thy transparent, cool and watry wealth
Here flowing fall,
And chide, and call,
(p. 343, ll. 1-4.)

Such words as "stealth," "cool," and "watry wealth" are soothing and they refresh the reader. While others, like "deep murmurs," "transparent," and "chide" suggest there is a message behind the water's song and justify the speaker's interest in the water's "call." This first waterfall gently flows into the second pool which collects the water and, at the same time, gives it meaning. The next couplet reads:

As if his liquid, loose Retinue staid
Lingring, and were of this steep place afraid,
(p. 343, ll. 5-6.)

Two important concepts are developed in these lines. The first is introduced by the pronoun "his" in line five, and the second becomes apparent after examining water's personification in line six. "His" can be read as either the water which belongs to the waterfalls or that belonging to God. If the pronoun were capitalized we might assume that it was God's possession. But, because it is not capitalized
we cannot be led to believe the water isn't divine. For Vaughan gives this water virtuous qualities which imply the water belongs to God and works as part of His plan. The words "loose Retinue" intensify this issue. This phrase implies that the pure water which flows freely in nature can, as in the case of Christian Baptism, act in the service of God. This concept is further developed later in the poem.

In the second couplet, water takes on human characteristics. The image of water lingering near the edge of the falls is not unlike man who, even though he spends a lifetime preparing for inevitable death, still hangs back in fear of it. This personification illuminates the meaning of the words in the second falls where the speaker parallels water's fall through the caverns of a stream into a splashing pool with man's passage from life into death. The parallel becomes more apparent in the final lines of the stanza. Here the speaker contends that although both the water and man must descend through a "common pass" it does not mean they will meet their "end." Rather, it means their fall will be quickened by this "deep and rocky grave." On the literal level, "grave is the third pool of the falls, while on the figurative level it is the "grave" to which men ascend after death. The "longer course" promised to both is the cycle which water goes through when it evaporates and returns to earth and the corresponding Christian process of spiritual death and renewal.

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As shown by the first stanza, the speaker's waterfall has been an inspiration which led him to meditate. Similarly, the speaker's creation of this image has allowed the reader to experience the waterfall's graceful quality, musical rhythm, and inspirational song. The function of this stanza is to set the scene for the formal meditation which begins with the opening lines of the second stanza.

Much of this stanza is written in iambic tetrameter, and the lines rhyme in couplets. This scheme allows the speaker to readily interweave the activity of the waterfall with his meditative thoughts. He begins this weaving process with an address to the waterfall.

Dear stream! dear bank, where often I Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye; Why, since each drop of thy quick store Runs thither, whence it flow'd before, 

(p. 343, 11. 13-16.)

Here, again, the speaker talks of the water's cyclical process. He says water flows over the falls, is swallowed by a pool, evaporates and returns as rain to earth from whence it came. But in the lines which follow the speaker, who is now inspired, seeks to find a parallel between the water's cycle and man's faith.

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 and more That what God takes, he'll not restore? 

(p. 343, 11. 17-22.)

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The theme of these lines is posed in the question which the speaker asks of all men. He says, if men know that water returns to its source, do they fear that in death they will not also return to their maker. This same reasoning has been used in other poems: the cock who sees Paradise is for Vaughan a testimonial that man, who was made in God's image, too, will see his face even if it is only after death. However, more is at work here than a return of the penitent sinner to his God.

Frail flesh can also be restored by the power of water which is present in Christian Baptism. This theme is employed in the next lines of the poem.

O useful Element and clean! My sacred wash and cleanser here,
(p. 344, 11. 23-24.)

His reference to water as a "useful element" and "sacred wash" reinforces the idea that men, who seek forgiveness, are healed.

Although these lines appear to contain the speaker's most profound thought, the climax of this poem has not been established. The poem's most luminous moments come in the form of two revelations, each dealing with man's regeneration on earth. The first appears in line twenty-five.

My first consigner unto those Fountains of life, where the lamb goes? What sublime truths, and wholesome themes Lodge in thy mystical deep streams!
(p. 344, 11. 25-28.)

Here the speaker says he has dedicated his life to Christ,
who is the "fountain of life" and cosigner of the poem. Fogle gives Revelation 7:13-17 as a gloss for this passage. The biblical reference recalls man washing his hands in the blood of the lamb, which signifies forgiveness of sins. Thus, salvation comes to those who seek it. The waterfall has now taken on a new dimension. When the poem began, the falls were a source of inspiration. Then they became an element which could baptize, and now they represent the "fountain of life." Studying the waterfall has led Vaughan to a discovery of a sublime truth. Furthermore, retelling the story and recreating the experience for his reader, Vaughan has made the poem an interpretation of God's word.

At this point in the poem Vaughan, who seems immersed in his meditation, takes a moment to thank the waterfall for inspiring him. The speaker's second revelation comes in lines twenty-nine and thirty.

Such as dull man can never finde
Unless that Spirit lead his minde,
(p. 344, ll. 29-30.)

Again, he implies that not all men have rekindled the "divine seed" he speaks of in "A Seed Growing Secretly." Therefore, not all men are capable of appreciating the splendor of the divine spirit in this waterfall. Central to the theme of this poem is the doctrine of salvation. John III explains, in a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, the difference between a man who has let the Holy Spirit into his heart rekindled the seed of our
childhood and one who has not. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . . likewise unless man is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." The poem repeats.

What sublime truths, and wholesome themes,
Lodge in thy mystical, deep streams!
Such as dull man can never finde,
Unless that Spirit lead his minde,
Which first upon thy face did move,
And hatch'd all with his quick'ning love.
(p. 344, ll. 27-32.)

This passage describes the purifying effects of water which carries the spirit of God to nature and man. However, the rejuvinating effects are only felt by those who have experienced spiritual rebirth.

In these lines the speaker has established the condition through which man can be led to meditate and the value which meditation can hold for the participant. As is the case with this poem, the speaker, who apparently has let the Spirit into his life, sees the waterfall, is persuaded to meditate on it, and by doing so, finds Truth.

To this point the poem continues at a steady pace toward man's salvation. However, the water which has flowed freely now appears to pause.

As this loud brooks incessant fall
In streaming rings restagnates all,
Which reach by course the bank, and then
Are no more seen, just so pass men.
(p. 344, ll. 31-34.)

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But we say the water cannot stop flowing! That indeed would change the entire reading of the poem. What is more, it would contradict all of the water imagery discussed thus far. What, then, is the answer?

The meaning of this passage is contingent on the definition of "restagnates." The O.E.D. defines the word as "to stagnate' to become or remain stagnant." This is the definition which Francis W. Nelson follows in his reading of the poem. He submits, "the passage is a simile for man's disappearance from life like the incessantly expanding rings on the surface of the pool as the water plunges into the pool (grave) at its foot." Nelson's reading is possible but it still does not give just reason for the water to stop its purifying process. Pebworth takes issue with Mr. Nelson. He contends the O.E.D. is guilty of misreading the passage. Because they give Vaughan's use of the word as a reference for their definition, it is possible they did not consider the Latin root of restagnates, which is "restagnare." Lewis and Short's definition of this word is "to run over, overflow." 


If the passage is read with this definition, the phenomenon of the waterfall lies in keeping with the theme of the poem. As the falling water hits the pool it bubbles up, sending rings to flow outward toward the pool's edge where it overflows the banks. Furthermore, as the water falls it leaves the image of circles growing across the surface. These alone repeat the image of the spheres, which act as a microcosm of eternity and suggest the cleansing process of the final judgment. This is water in motion; it only gives the appearance of stagnation. Thus, Man, like the water, falls into death, but in falling he too is purified when his soul is stripped of bodily sins on its journey into death. The poem concludes with a colloquy with God. The words show the sincerity and humility of their speaker.

O my invisible estate,
My glorious liberty, still late!
Thou art the Channel my soul seeks,
Not this with Cataracts and Creeks.
(p. 344, ll. 37-40.)

The "invisible estate" and "glorious liberty" are the same as "paradise and light" in "Cock-crowing." It is the vision of God he so desperately yearns for and is ready to die for. But, he too must suffer the cyclical changes of life; now is not the time to die.

The meaning and structure of "The Water-fall" allow the reader to see the process which Vaughan goes through when he meditates. By its conclusion we have come to realize that for Vaughan the water which passes over the falls has been
hypnotic, and its spell has brought him to a recognition of God's work in nature. But we have taken his journey; we too have seen the flow of sacred water, have felt its refreshing qualities and have learned of the Spirit which will return unto God, the source of all life and our salvation.

Water in Vaughan is always moving. It repeats the cycle of nature while manifesting itself in many forms. Tears, rain, streams, and waterfalls all represent the forgiving power of God whose blood, in Christ, cleansed our sins. Water weaves its way through Vaughan's poetry, carrying with it the perpetual promise of salvation and rebirth. Sometimes Vaughan expresses the significance of God's power by recreating an experience he had in nature, as in "The Water-fall" or "The Bird." In others he uses Biblical stories which reinforce the significance of baptism and nature's cycle of birth, death, and regeneration. However, in all his poetry water has the power to restore the poet's heart and bring life back to the seed which God planted in him. This seed is the only memory Vaughan has of God; its rebirth is necessary for salvation.

In Vaughan, water is the great restorative which quickens dying spirits, restores life, and forgives sin. It is also the inspirational source which, as in "The Water-fall," brings Vaughan closer to truth.

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The Completed Journey

This unifying theme of *Silex Scintillans*, Books One and Two, is Vaughan's spiritual regeneration. This theme is introduced by the words of the book's title. "Silex" is a flint, while "Scintillans" is a derivative of the word *scintillate*, which means to bring forth sparks. Thus, the title produces an image of sparks coming forth from a flint. This concept is further defined in the frontispiece, an emblem of the poet's stony heart struck soft by the fiery flint of God. The emblem of the 1650 edition, combined with the book's title, provides a metaphor for the poet's spiritual renewal which he interprets as a sudden conversion brought about by the hand and will of God.

Vaughan celebrates this renewal in the poem, "Regeneration," which opens the first volume. This poem recounts the poet's experience and likens his spiritual rebirth to the coming of spring. Wyly says this poem's theme of regeneration comes from the baptismal process which holds that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5.)¹ In both volumes, Vaughan's search for spiritual renewal in nature is prefaced by his repentance of sins and confessions of faith. However, his

entire Christian experience is best experienced in his poetry by the natural images which weave their way through both volumes. These images bring together nature's cyclical process and Vaughan's spiritual growth with Biblical teaching. The most dominant of these patterns is water, which Vaughan incorporates to depict his regeneration. The progressive change in his use of water imagery illustrates Vaughan's developing style. Vaughan's use of water changes with his increasing awareness of God's presence on earth. For instance, in the first volume water is used in images of tears, fountains, and streams. The final lines of "Man's Fall, and Recovery" show Vaughan seeking salvation through water.

Reduc'd th' Extent of works of faith; so made
Of their Red Sea, a Spring, I wash, they wade.
(p. 159, ll. 31-32.)

These concluding lines from "The Shower" show a different use of the image.

Yet, if as thou dost melt, and thy traine
Of drops make soft the Earth, my eyes could weep
O're my hard heart, that's bound up, and asleep,
Perhaps at last
(Some such showers past.)
(p. 160, ll. 13-18.)

In the first passage Vaughan finds renewal by entering the waters of the Red Sea which cleanse him of his sins. In the second book, the image of rain softening the earth is like the tears of humility which can soften his own heart to receive God's grace. In these early poems water works as God's agent. It restores life to the dying earth and
softens his sinful heart. This prepares him for renewal and brings him closer to God.

Similar calls of the sinner are heard in Volume Two. Poems like "Abel's Blood," "St. Mary Magdalen," "Begging," and "Anguish" tell how the waters of the earth and tears of the humbled sinner can restore the poet's and mankind's stony but penitent hearts. However, at the conclusion of the volume, Vaughan no longer feels anguished by the threats of sin which can keep him from entering heaven. Instead, he feels confident of his faith, and he feels assured of entrance into heaven. This is illustrated in his poem, "The Water-fall." Here he uses water as a metaphor for Christian renewal. The poem explains that as water goes over the falls into death and then returns to God, so too upon dying does man fall into the hands of God. Vaughan's new acceptance of death characterizes this later volume. This is why his praise in "They have all gone into the world of light":

Dear beauteous death! jewel of the just
belongs to the second volume and not the first.\(^2\) "The Water-fall" also speaks of the assurance of salvation and forgiveness of sins. For, the image of death which is depicted in the poem's first stanza is also an allegory of the poet's spiritual death and subsequent Christian renewal. In this poem, Vaughan looks to nature to be his teacher.

His experience with the waterfall teach him to believe in God's power of forgiveness and assure him of God's presence on earth.

In his later work Vaughan praises nature: the earth, the water, the flowers, and the animals are alive with the divine spirit. In fact, his new awareness of God's presence gives this volume a peaceful tone which is never heard in Volume One. This tone is apparent in "The Bird." Pettet says this poem can be read as an allegory of Vaughan's spiritual history.³

Many a sullen storm
(For which coarse man seems much the fitter born,)
Rain'd on thy bed;
And harmless head.
And now as fresh and cheerful as the light
Thy little heart in early hymns doth sing
Unto that Providence, Whose unseen arm
Curb'd them, and cloath'd thee well and warm.
(p. 287, l. 3-10.)

Here, Vaughan uses the bird to speak of his own struggle to be reborn into the light of God. Likewise, the bird's rejuvenated heart, which sings praises to its maker, is like the enlightened heart of the poet who finds peace writing praises to God and His creation.

In "The dwelling-place," Vaughan writes of God living in nature:

But I am sure, thou dost now come
Oft to a narrow, homely room,
Where Thou too hast but the least part,
My God, I mean my sinful heart.
(p. 315, l. 13-16.)

Vaughan's new vision of God's presence in the natural world, his understanding of salvation, and his restored faith come with his discovery of a possible passage through the veil during his lifetime. This theme, like the water image, has its beginning in the first volume and takes on new dimensions in the second. In Volume One, the veil is introduced as the curtain which hangs between the poet and his desired vision of his maker.

At last, said I,
"Since in these veys I'm Eclips'd Eye
May not approach Thee, (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?)
I'll disapparell, and to buy
But one half-glaunce, gladly dye."
("Vanity of Spirit," p. 168, 11. 29-34.)

The night, of course, is a metaphor for the narrator's spiritual night, and the passage he desires is the sight of God. In the poems of the 1650 edition Vaughan is oppressed by the burden of his sins. He continually seeks repentance in the hope that he too can experience rebirth. He knows, however, that his sins are great. Therefore, he looks for God's assurance that he will be forgiven and granted passage to heaven where he can see God's face.

In the second volume, Vaughan desires to become one of God's chosen through whom God elects to speak to man. This new desire is also embodied in imagery of the veil. In "The Night," the veil through which he seeks passage becomes the veil over his own heart. This veil is constructed of doubt and lack of faith. He believes if he becomes
"the best believer" as Nicodemus was, then his heart will also be ravished by the spirit. In these later poems Vaughan sees God on earth. He feels His presence, but he also wants to experience a mystical union with Him. Vaughan's hope for such a union is fleeting. He never records a mystical union, so we might assume he never experienced one. Thus, the second volume closes not with feelings of joy which it hoped for, but with poems about death in which Vaughan accepts his position on earth and finds peace contemplating the bliss of the afterlife.

In addition to these differences between parts one and two, there is by the conclusion of Volume Two a decided change in the poet's purpose. The focus of Volume One is Vaughan's concern for himself: his salvation and his regeneration. He states these poems are written for the purpose of paying rent to God who granted him spiritual renewal in "The Dedication":

My God, thou that didst dye for me,
These thy death's fruits I offer thee,
Death that to me was life, and light
But darke, and deep pangs to thy sight.
Some drops of thy all-quick'ning blood
Fell on my heart, those made it bud,
And put forth thus, though, Lord, before
The ground was curs'd and void of store.
(p. 138, ll. 1-8.)

... But, Lord, I have expell'd them, and so bent,
Begge thou wouldst take thy Tenant's Rent.
(p. 138, ll. 13-14.)

At the close of the second volume, Vaughan has come to see himself as a part of a larger world than he did in

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Volume One; for, the scope of his poetry has changed to include all mankind and his purpose has become to teach the word of God.

In the introduction to the second volume he states his purpose.

But THE God of the SPIRITS OF ALL FLESH, hath granted me further use of MINE, than I look for in the BODY; and when I expected, and had (by his assistance) prepared for a MESSAGE OF DEATH, then did he ANSWER me with LIFE; I hope to his GLORY, and my great ADVANTAGE: that I may flourish not with LEAF only, but with some FRUIT also; which HOPE and EARNEST DESIRE of his poor CREATURE, I humbly beseech him perfect and fulfill for his dear SONS sake, unto whom, with him and the most holy and loving SPIRIT, he ascribed by ANGELS, by MEN, and by all his WORKS, all Glory, and Wisdom, and Dominion, in this the TEMPORAL and in the ETERNAL being.

(p. 261.)

Vaughan wishes that these poems might be inspired by God and therefore speak God's truth as do the teachings of Christ. "The Dedication" poem in the second volume is the same poem which is introduced in Volume One, except that Vaughan adds two stanzas to the original poem. In these, he speaks directly to God:

Dear Lord, 'tis finished! and how he
That copyed it, presents it thee.
'Twas thine first, and to thee returns
From thee it shin'd, through here it burns;
If the Sun rise on rocks, is't right,
To call it their inherent light?
No, nor can I say, this is mine,
For dearest Jesus, 'tis all thine.

(p. 265, ll. 1-8.)

This addition reflects on the volume which follows; he wants us to know that Christ helped him to write his poetry. The concluding poems in this collection repeat this theme. For
example, in "The Book" Vaughan writes that his poems were not only inspired and blessed by the Divine, but are also part of God's plan. The poem begins with this address to God.

Eternal God! Maker of all  
That have liv'd here since the man's fall;  
(p. 346, ll. 1-2.)

He then takes time to describe the physical makeup of the book which is literally the volume he has just completed. He begins with the paper which, he says, was first a seed planted by God. After it grew into grass, it was "drest or spun" into "linen." This passage is analogous to the poet's own conversion which was made possible by the regeneration of the seed sown in him by God. As this seed grew, he became closer to God and wrote of his experiences in the poetry. The cover of his book is then described as a tree grown by God and put to use as wood, which is then wrapped with the hide of an animal. The wood and the animal are examples of natural imagery in Vaughan's poetry. His description of the book, its pages and cover, is written as if he and these elements of nature lived for the purpose of creating this volume.

The remaining stanza of this poem is reserved for the poet's thoughts and prayers to God who helped him write.

A covering o're this aged book,  
Which makes me wisely weep and look  
On my own dust; meer dust it is,  
But not so dry and clean as this.  
(p. 247, ll. 19-22.)

4 "The Agreement," also speaks of God's influence on Vaughan's writing.
In this passage he humbles himself before God as a servant who has written sacred poetry on God's behalf.

When thou shalt make all new again,
Destroying onely death and pain,
Give him amongst thy works a place,
Who in them lov'ed and sought thy face!
(p. 347, 11. 27-30.)

These lines are ambiguous and perhaps purposely so. In them we find that the speaker appears to be asking God to give him, the poet, a place in heaven. However, because the subject of the poem is the book and place sought is among God's works, the passage can also be interpreted to say Vaughan desires his poetry to be kept among God's sacred works.

Vaughan's purpose, then, at the end of the second volume, is still his own salvation as it is made possible through the writing of his poetry. But, as the poem indicates, he is also concerned with the content of his work and whether it interprets the secrets of divine truth which were given to him by God.

It can be said that in the poetry of the second volume Vaughan completes his journey to salvation. He discovers God in the world surrounding him and allows nature to be his teacher. From her he has learned of the work of God. In the later poems like "The Water-fall" and "The Night," he tells how nature has restored his faith, how she has given him new hope for salvation and made him aware of his place in creation.
To say that the poetry of the second volume is superior to the first is not possible, for surely there are great poems in both volumes. However, it can be said that the body of poetry in the second volume of Silex Scintillans moves away from the personal concern expressed in the first to include a greater awareness of mankind and the natural world. Furthermore, it is because of Vaughan's new awareness that the poetry in the second volume reveals an altered style. For these poems are not inspired by the works of his contemporaries; they are inspired by a greater poet, who is God.
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Vita

I was born fifteen minutes after my twin sister on August 24, 1947, to Dr. and Mrs. Matthew W. Gaffney in Rochester, New York. We were the youngest of four children. In 1965, I graduated from Abington High School in Abington, Pennsylvania. That fall I attended Lindenwood College for Women in St. Charles, Missouri, where I was a member of the college honor society, and graduated in January of 1969. During my college years I studied Renaissance Art and Literature in France and Italy.

Following graduation I decided to work as a Second Grade teacher at the Orchard Farm School in West Alton, Missouri. In June of 1970 I resigned from this position and took another, teaching pre-school children, with Universal Education in Garden City, Long Island. My next job was with the Scroll School in the Bronx, where I worked from December 1970 to June 1971. During this time I was enrolled at C. W. Post University, where I took 9 hours of graduate credit to fulfill requirements for a teaching certificate. In November, 1971, I started to teach English Literature at St. Dominic High School in Oyster Bay, New York. In the spring of 1973 I moved to Philadelphia and that fall taught English at William Penn School District in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania.
I was married in September of 1970. Since that time I have had two sons: James, age 4, and Matthew, age 2.

In September of 1975 I entered Lehigh University, and have completed my requirements for a Master's Degree on a part-time basis, while maintaining my positions with the Main Line Symphony Orchestra and the Musical Cotrie of Wayne, Pennsylvania. I play the viola, sit on the Board of Directors, and write the publicity for these organizations. My news releases appear in local papers as well as in The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Evening Bulletin.