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In hope of heaven: English recusant prison writings of the sixteenth century

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sixteenth century**

Strauss, Paul E., Ph.D.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1991

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IN HOPE OF HEAVEN: ENGLISH RECUSANT
PRISON WRITINGS
OF THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

by

Paul E. Strauss

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

Department of English
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Approval Page

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the prison writings of four Catholic writers in sixteenth century England, all of whom were imprisoned for their failure to take the Oath of Supremacy acknowledging the English monarch as Head of the Church. They were all executed or exiled for their resistance to the Oath. They also wrote books while they were in prison to encourage themselves and others to persist in the faith, with the exception of Robert Southwell, who wrote his book shortly before his imprisonment.

John Fisher was imprisoned in 1534 and executed in 1535. While in prison he wrote two letters to his sister, Elizabeth White, which were meant to stimulate her faith and increase her love for God. Thomas More was also imprisoned in 1534 and executed in 1535. He wrote several works while in prison, one of which was the Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation. This work is a personal statement by More of the steps he took to fortify himself against imprisonment and prepare himself to face martyrdom if necessary. Robert Southwell was a Jesuit missionary to England who was imprisoned and executed in 1595. Prior to his own imprisonment he wrote the Epistle of Comfort to increase the determination of Catholics, especially the Earl of Arundel, to endure imprisonment and execution for the faith. Finally there is Benedict Canfield, who wrote The Christian Knight while he was imprisoned at Wisbech Castle in 1599.

These works fall naturally into the consolatory tradition, which has both Christian and classical roots. This study looks at the historical background of these works, including their precedents such as the works of Plato, Boethius, St. Paul and St. John. Each work is analyzed as to predominant themes such as the importance of meditation upon the Passion of Christ, the impermanence of earthly life, and the Four Last Things--death, judgment, hell and heaven. Of particular importance for understanding the motivation behind these works is the idea, more than any other, which provided impetus to these writers to endure whatever misfortune came their way. They believed that heaven would be obtained by the sufferings they endured, and it was this hope that spurred their writing efforts.

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Chapter 1

Recusant Prison Literature

This dissertation will concern itself with the prison writings of four Catholic writers in the sixteenth century in England, all of whom were imprisoned for their faith and ultimately executed or exiled for it. St. John Fisher was imprisoned in 1534 for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, which declared Henry VIII to be head of the Church in England in 1535. While in prison, he wrote to his sister, Elizabeth White, two letters which were meant to stimulate her faith and increase her love for God. St. Thomas More was imprisoned in 1534 for a similar refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy and was also executed in 1535. While in prison, he wrote several works, one of which was the Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation. This work is a personal statement by More of the steps he took to fortify himself against persecution and prepare himself to face martyrdom if necessary. Robert Southwell was a Jesuit missionary to England who was imprisoned and executed under Elizabeth I. Prior to his own imprisonment, he wrote the Epistle of Comfort to bolster the determination of imprisoned Catholics, especially the Earl of Arundel, who spent the declining years of his life in the Tower of London. Although Southwell was not in prison when he wrote the work, he might as well have been, for he was in hiding from the pursuivants and forced to spend his days in a small enclo-

sure in Lady Arundel's home. Finally there is The Christian Knight by Benedict Canfield, an English Capuchin monk who had been sent to England as a Catholic missionary. He was captured and imprisoned in Wisbech Castle. Enduring captivity and expecting execution at any time, he wrote this book. It, too, is largely consolatory in nature, preparing other Catholics to endure similar persecution if necessary.

These works fall naturally into the consolatory tradition, which has both Christian and classical roots. However, they are personal statements of the authors' own deeply held beliefs, and to see them as merely offshoots of a traditional genre lessens their immediacy. Incarceration provides a crucible for the testing of the soul. In prison, under the threat of execution, one must reach deep into the soul to find those beliefs which will sustain. They are works written in the ultimate duress.

The prison environment bears certain resemblances to the monastic life, especially when the prisoner finds himself in solitary confinement. The original meaning of the word monk is "one who lives alone". Later the word was applied to all who had left the world, whether they lived alone or in a community (Knowles 9). In the Plotinian sense of the concept, monasticism provides one the opportunity to be alone in order to return to the Great Alone. Each person who shall look "in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the

Pure, that from Which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being" (Saunders 237). This vision is predicated upon leaving the world and its myriad distractions behind.

One of the differences pointed out by Josephine Secker (123) between the classical traditions of consolation literature and the recusant tradition is this note of meditation, of turning inward, as opposed to the philosophical approach. The average person, if imprisoned and placed under the threat of painful execution, would perhaps compose letters to friends and comment upon the injustice of his predicament, or he would lodge complaints about life in general, or he would frame letters of appeal to prominent people for a stay of execution and an eventual pardon. This was not the course followed by the recusants. They accepted their fate with Christian resignation and looked inward to find the strength to sustain them. They seem never to have questioned the injustice of what had happened to them. For they knew themselves to be sinners, and if they were to receive strict justice, they would be treated far worse. They often saw their sufferings for the faith as a privilege, and they took consolation from this perception.

Prison was an enclosed and isolated environment for the four recusant writers discussed here. Three of them were imprisoned in the Tower of London, which was the equivalent

to today's maximum security prison. The other was imprisoned in Wisbech Castle and spent long hours in an isolated cell. Other prisons were not quite as harsh, and in some of them, Catholics were allowed considerable freedom of movement as well as the liberty to practice their faith unmolested by the authorities. It is interesting that when Benedict Canfield was undergoing his conversion experience in 1585, he went to Newgate Prison to find a Catholic priest to receive him into the Church. Treatment and conditions varied with the prisons and the keepers. The Tower of London and Bridewell offered particularly harsh treatment to Catholics (Pendry 49-53). On the other hand, Newgate was far more lenient. Priests were often allowed to come and go as they pleased; some were even allowed to lodge outside the prison. Mass was said on a regular basis, not only for the inmates but for outsiders as well (Pendry 129-135). The Fleet Prison allowed the custom of inmates roaming about town if they were accompanied by a keeper, whom they had to pay out of their own pocket (Pendry 210). Priests would have little trouble finding a wealthy donor to permit them to take advantage of this custom. Parish work was often conducted from the Fleet. Masses were also said in Newgate (Pendry 279) and Marshalsea (Pendry 249). This led to the rather strange situation in which those who were incarcerated were the only ones who could practice their religion with some degree of freedom.

The Tower of London, however, was not nearly so open or so lenient. Prisoners were often subjected to extended periods of solitary confinement. In the earlier part of the century, both Fisher and More were allowed visitors, although the greater part of their day was spent in isolation. Under Elizabeth, however, imprisoned priests were often kept in solitary confinement. Some held up better than others to this regime. Southwell seemed to thrive on it, but William Weston went into a period of deep melancholy, which was only relieved by a vision which he believed had been sent to him by God.

The prison environment could be similar to the monastic life, at least that monasticism envisioned by its founders. The recusants discussed here were isolated, thrown back on their own inner resources. Distractions, perhaps fervently wished for, were kept to a minimum. This is one of the key elements in their prison writings, the presentation of a stark reality. There was no amelioration of this fundamental vision provided the events and situations of their daily life. They were forced by the very nature of their position to probe the ultimate facts of existence, and this consideration took place in the context of the Christian message that proposed the whole scheme of creation, sin, redemption, and judgement. Consideration of the ultimate facts of existence always led them to the Four Last Things--death, judgement, hell, and heaven. These four last things

are hallmarks of recusant prison writing, and the study of them is inspired by Christianity not classicism.

The other great meditation of the imprisoned recusants was the passion of Christ, which was particularly appropriate for one facing imprisonment, torture, and death. The passion of Christ, as was known by all great Christian teachers, was an ordeal freely chosen and willingly accepted by Christ because of his love for man.

Christian tradition furnishes other examples of prison writing. Especially appropriate to the recusant context are the prison writings of St. Paul and St. John. The classical tradition also furnishes examples such as Socrates and Boethius. Socrates did not view death with much concern, at least not in the speeches attributed to him by Plato in the Apology. To Socrates, the possibilities were rather simple. One either experienced a life after death, or one found complete oblivion. He did not express a concern about either alternative. If there was life after death, he did not conceive of it as being a worse state than life on earth, but only an enhancement of earthly life. If there was only oblivion following death, he did not see that as an event to be feared.

Death at the very worst, to Socrates, was similar to a good night's sleep. This was hardly an eventuality to be feared. The other possibility of life after death, Socrates sees as a continuation of earthly life, only on a higher

plane. Socrates describes a judgement after death, but it is a judgement that is almost casual and friendly, and he is certain of his own uprightness in front of the judges. He looks at his judges as equals, men of similar temperament and intellect. There is no idea of the absolute judge, one who is all good and all powerful, who judges men necessarily born into a life of sin with its inevitable guilt. There is no notion of the Christian judgement. The heaven of Socrates is the philosopher's heaven, the one that Dante described in the First Circle of the Inferno, a place where wise men congregate and talk to each other much as they did on earth. Thus heavenly life is a continuation of earthly life. Missing from his description of the afterlife is not only the notion of hell, a worse place, but the idea of the absolute, the beatific vision. The recusants looked forward to heaven for the vision of God, that overwhelming rapture found in absolute love.

The vision of Boethius, although more cosmic in scale, is equally philosophical. It is the smallness of earth and its events compared to the greatness of the cosmos that is of comfort to Boethius:

It is well known, and you have seen it demonstrated by astronomers, that beside the extent of the heavens, the circumference of the earth has the size of a point; that is to say, compared with the magnitude of the celestial sphere, it may be

thought of as having no extent at all

(Boethius 73).

This not only means that earthly fame and glory are trifles, but also means that the events that happen to the individual are not that important. Boethius then proceeds to demonstrate that true human happiness comes from within the individual and not from the world and its apparent goods. He proceeds by rejecting fame, glory, riches, and pleasure. There is a philosophical resignation found in Boethius that is not found in the recusants. The recusants proceed not by rejection of the world and its pleasures, although this is a part of their message. They proceed rather along the path of love. It is not that pleasure and glory are wrongs to be rejected, but they must be found in a higher source. They are to be found only in God, and their consummation will be found in heaven.

The prison writings of the Apostles form a closer analogue to the recusant inspiration. Paul endured two prolonged periods of imprisonment, one at Caesarea and one at Rome. His imprisonment at Rome occurred towards the end of his apostolic career, and he wrote some of his final messages to the Church. In Philippians 1:14 he indicates he is a prisoner: "And the greater number of the brethren in the Lord, gaining courage from my chains, have dared to speak the word of God more freely and without fear." Paul sees his imprisonment as strengthening and building up the

Church. He sees that persecution defeats its own purpose, for it is meant to intimidate people but rather emboldens them. In the same letter, Paul introduces a theme which is prominent in later recusant literature. He calls himself and his fellow Christians citizens of heaven (3:20). They expect their deliverer, Christ Jesus, to come from heaven and "refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of his glory by exerting the power by which he is able to subject all things to himself" (3:21). The recusant writers, also in prison for their faith, adopted a similar theme. They devoted themselves to the cross of Christ through meditation upon the Passion.

Paul also wrote Colossians from his imprisonment at Rome. In the final paragraph, he forwards the greetings of a friend, Aristarchus, whom, he says, is a "fellow prisoner" (4:10). What is interesting about the epistle is that, although written from prison, it is an epistle of deliverance. Paul tells us that God "has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have our redemption, the remission of our sins" (1:13-14). Although a captive, Paul is free, and this is his central message, just as it was the central message of the recusant prisoners in the sixteenth century. Paul even glories in his own sufferings. He internalizes the sufferings of Christ, and becomes one with him. "I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what

is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church" (2:24).

The letter to the Ephesians was also written during Paul's Roman imprisonment. Again he writes of freedom while he is in prison: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord" (4:1) and he says that in Christ his release or his "redemption" (1:7) is secured. In this letter he introduces another theme which became so prominent in the development of the notion of the Christian Knight. He indicates that the Christian life is a struggle, a warfare. It is not a warfare against men, but against spirits. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high" (6:12). . He then directs his followers to put on "the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day" (6:11). Paul follows through on this image by producing a small allegory on the armor of God. Each piece of armor represents a facet of Christian life:

Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of justice, and having your feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace, in all things taking up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the

sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God
(6:14-17).

This theme was adopted by later Christian writers who attempted to spiritualize the idea of knighthood.

The other great prison writing of the New Testament is the Book of Revelation, written while John was imprisoned on the penal colony of Patmos. John's message, no matter how clouded or vague, had to do with persecution and resistance to persecution. He encouraged people to be committed, to take sides and forsake the blandishments of the pagan world. He predicted a dire fate for the persecutors, as well as those who gave into the persecution and offered sacrifice to the pagan gods. He predicted a great state of future happiness for those who remained firm in the faith. In the end, he claimed, the persecution would pass and those who remained faithful would prevail. Justice would be restored to the world. This message had an appeal to recusants, especially those suffering a similar imprisonment.

Recusant prison literature is devotional in nature, and that devotion is largely traditional in inspiration. It was as if the recusants were attempting to restore and perpetuate traditions that were in jeopardy, much as the Council of Trent defined and maintained those essential doctrines most questioned by the Reformers. Some of the traditional elements of recusant devotion were asceticism, or the denial of the flesh and rejection of worldly values, devotion to

the passion of Christ, the cultivation of martyrdom, and meditation upon the four last things.

However, in all this devotion to the four last things, it must be remembered that one of the four last things is heaven, the ultimate fulfillment and culmination of all one's hopes and desires. It is a state of rapturous love and happiness, far greater than anything that one can imagine on earth.

The other element of special devotion for the recusant writers was the passion of Christ, represented by the crucifix. This, too, was a popular feature of traditional devotion. Devotion to the passion of Christ included the stations of the cross, Good Friday tre ore devotions, and the reading of the Passion accounts from the Gospels. This devotion, too, is often rejected today as morbid. It is important to point out that the recusants saw the sufferings of Christ as an expression of unbounded love, because Christ truly loved mankind and put its welfare ahead of his own.

The chapters which follow will look in more detail at some of the works composed by Fisher, More, Southwell, and Canfield while they were in prison, or directed to those that were in prison. These works provide insight into what the authors believed to be truly important, that which would sustain them in their ultimate extremity. Thus they have the nature of consolaciones providing reasons for their sufferings and a hope that all would turn out to be a final triumph in the world to come.

Chapter 2

The Tower Works of John Fisher

In many ways, Fisher's whole life was a preparation for his final imprisonment and execution. In devoting his life to asceticism and self-denial, he was practicing a traditional form of piety. Yet Fisher, for his day, was also "modern". He was a chancellor of Cambridge University and stressed the cultivation of the New Learning.¹ This progressive side of Fisher is often overlooked because of the nature of his death; that is, he died a martyr for the old faith.² Fisher was deeply devoted to the revival of classical learning taking place about him. As chancellor of Cambridge University, he stressed the study of the three classical languages-- Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He worked energetically for the foundation of a new college, named after his patron saint, St. John the Baptist. Bradshaw points out how the hagiographical stance taken towards Fisher by his coreligionists sometimes obscures this practical man of affairs. One of Fisher's great accomplishments, he tells us, was his "ability to retain the confidence of the university establishment while committing himself to the advancement of reform" (7). The concentration upon the martyrdom of Fisher has also caused the reader to see Fisher mainly as an old man, a respected elder full of years and

wisdom.³ But Fisher was not born old, and his middle years of strength and vigor were spent as an academic reformer at Cambridge and as Bishop of Rochester. In both activities, he excelled and established a solid reputation among his colleagues.

The reforms which he promoted as an educator and as a bishop were both academic and pastoral in nature.⁴ Although Fisher's educational methods were firmly rooted in tradition, he did stress certain progressive reforms. For one thing, he promoted the study of what he saw as the three biblical languages and although, like the true medieval churchman that he was, he centered the curriculum in a theological framework, his theological approach was evangelical rather than purely academic or speculative.⁵

Fisher was a child of the Renaissance in his appreciation of current humanist writers, including Erasmus and Johannes Reuchlin, a Hebrew scholar who introduced many of the doctrines of the Cabala in Europe. Reuchlin, like Pico before him, attempted to blend the Cabala with Christian teaching, forming a curious blend of Neo-Platonism. Such teachings revolved around the numerical significance of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet which were thought to reflect and summarize similar numbers at the heart of the universe. Thus it was a system of numerical correspondences between the spoken words of the Cabala and the natural world. This sympathy between the spiritual world and the natural world

would not have been foreign to someone like Fisher, who held a sacramental view of reality. Reuchlin also attempted to draw from the current doctrines of Neo-Platonism, which he would have learned first under the tutelage of Pico, a form of operative magic, through which knowledge would leave the arena of the speculative and enter the domain of power (Yates 24).

Fisher was particularly devoted to the preaching of the gospel and won the patronage of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, in the establishment of Cambridge readerships which encouraged a preaching style firmly grounded in biblical scholarship along with an effective method of presentation. Fisher himself was a preacher of note. Jean Rouschause tells us that the preaching of Fisher by itself would have been sufficient to sustain his reputation for posterity. Fisher himself began the study of both Greek and Hebrew when he was in his late forties, because he desired to read the scriptures in the original languages. Preaching, he believed, must be supported by a sound knowledge of scripture.

Fisher had one of the best stocked libraries in England; in fact, his early biographer ⁶ tells us that it was the greatest library of any bishop in Europe (51). Erasmus, in one of his letters, told Fisher that he knew the library was to him a very "paradise" (Quoted in Hughes 51). Fisher had a love of learning and, besides encouraging others to

study, was a serious student himself. He read widely in scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the Scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages, and the classical learning that was being rediscovered in his lifetime. Deeply attached to Christian learning, he was also profoundly interested in seeing that it was expressed with the appropriate eloquence. In this he was a student not only of Erasmus but also of the early Italian humanists.

Fisher was also renowned as Bishop of Rochester. He achieved a reputation for holiness and dedication to episcopal duties during a time when bishops were more often employed in political and diplomatic duties than in pastoral. Fisher took his duties as bishop very seriously and, if we can believe his early biographer, his appointment to the see of Rochester was made by Henry VII solely upon the basis of merit, an event unusual enough to call for comment:

Now for that the King had thus solemnly preferred this man to the high promotion of a bishopric being but a chaplain to the Countess, his mother, and never yet advanced to any other dignity in the Church before, many thought that it was by the chief procurement of his mistress, the Lady Margaret, and so divers would say to the King. But indeed it was far otherwise. For the King (when he heard any man speak of it) would solemnly affirm and openly protest that he never promoted

him unto it, either upon the suit of his mother or of any other person living, neither yet (as they call it) for price or prayer, but only for the pure devotion, perfect sanctity and great learning he saw in him... (Hughes 28).

The See of Rochester was often seen in the sixteenth century as a steppingstone to a greater position, since it was the smallest and poorest diocese in England. His early biographer also tells us that he was offered the bishoprics of Lincoln and Ely by Henry VIII, but he turned both down to stay in Rochester (29). He is reported to have said that "he wouldn't change his poor old wife for the richest widow in England" (Macklen 12).

Fisher's early biographer gives us many details about how he ministered to his diocese. Though this biography was written in the hagiographic tradition of the Middle Ages when the Golden Legend was one of the most popular of books, this does not mean that all the stories are apocryphal. These stories no doubt contain a measure of truth, since Fisher would have consciously modeled himself upon the stories found in the Golden Legend as well as other hagiographic sources. The stories found in his early biography present us with the best picture of Fisher as bishop. The first thing Fisher did as Bishop of Rochester was to visit all the parishes in his diocese "sequestering all such as he found unworthy to occupy" their positions (31). Fisher

started off as an active bishop: "And by the way he omitted neither preaching to the people, nor confirming of children, nor relieving of needy and indigent persons; so that by all means he observed a due comeliness in the House of God" (31).

Fisher observed a perfect balance between the demands of the active and contemplative life:

As long as he was in contemplation he kept alone; but when action should be used, his divine words sounded full loud in all men's ears....All pastors and curates used him for their lantern, as one of whom they might perfectly learn when to use action and when contemplation; for in these two things did he so far excel, that hard it were to find one so well practiced and expert in any of them apart, as he was in both of them together (32).

Fisher was active in preaching to the souls in his care, although few of his sermons survive.⁷

We have hitherto declared unto you his great and painful diligence in preaching the word of God: which custom he used not only in his younger days when health served, but also even to his extreme age, when many times his weary and feeble legs were not able to sustain his weak body standing, but forced him to have a chair and so to teach sitting (Hughes 33).

Note that Fisher is commended for his teaching, not only for his administration of the diocese. This places him firmly in the tradition of the early Fathers of the Church, such as Ambrose the early teacher of Augustine, and Augustine himself. While energetic administrators, these latter two are largely praised for their teaching rather than administrative abilities. As part of his teaching ability, Fisher is particularly commended for the works of his pen directed against the heretics (Hughes 33). He was resolute in his pursuit of sanctity, which in the hagiographic tradition could be obtained through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The spiritual works he performed so resolutely that he "seemed a very devourer of heavenly food" (Hughes 34). The following passage is worth quoting extensively to show how his early biographer saw him as fulfilling the corporal works of mercy:

Wheresoever he lay, either at Rochester or elsewhere, his order was to enquire where any poor sick folk lay near him, which after he once knew, he would diligently visit them. And where he saw any of them likely to die, he would preach to them, teaching them the way to die, with such godly persuasions, that for the most part he never departed till the sick persons were well satisfied and contented with death. Many times it was his chance to come to such poor houses as for want of

chimneys were very smoky, and thereby so noisome, that scant any man could abide in them. Nevertheless himself would sit by the sick patient many times the space of three or four hours together in the smoke, when none of his servants were able to abide in the house, but were fain to tarry without till his coming abroad. And in some other poor houses, where stairs were wanting, he would never disdain to climb up by a ladder for such a good purpose. And when he had given them such ghostly comfort as he thought expedient for their souls, he would at his departure leave behind him his charitable alms, giving charge to his steward or other officers daily to prepare meat convenient for them (if they were poor) and sent it unto them (Hughes 35).

These works of mercy were not only performed when he was abroad in his diocese, but also on a daily basis at the Bishop's palace in Rochester:

Besides he gave at his gate to divers poor people (which were commonly no small number) a daily alms of money, to some ij, to some iiij, and some vj and some more after the rate of their necessity. That being done, every of them was rewarded likewise with meat; which was daily brought to the gate. And lest any fraud, partiality, or other

disorder might arise in distribution of the same, he provided himself a place, whereunto immediately after dinner he would resort and there stand to see the division with his own eyes (Hughes 35-36). Fisher remained busy, not only with the day to day administration of his diocese, the performance of corporal works of mercy, and other good deeds, but he also remained the chancellor of the University of Cambridge, an office he held until the day of his death. "For who hath at any time seen him idle, walk or wander abroad?" (Hughes 32). This busy schedule no doubt left him tired at the end of the day, but his life of prayer and contemplation only began in earnest after the day's work was done.

When night was come, which commonly brings rest to all creatures, then would he many times despatch away his servants and fall to his prayers a long space. And after he had ended the same, he laid him down upon a poor hard couch of straw and mats (for other bed he used none) provided at Rochester in his closet, near the cathedral church, where he might look into the choir and hear Divine Service; and being laid, he never rested above four hours at one time, but straightways rose and ended the rest of his devout prayers (Hughes 37).

Thus we can see that Fisher was the ideal bishop and ideal teacher, at least according to his early biographer. And

this life of sanctity was capped with the martyr's crown.

As a writer, Fisher did most of his work in Latin, writing for the European intellectual community of scholars; he composed learned works on scripture, religious topics, and later polemical works to refute the Protestant Reformers. Fisher wrote at least three works in Latin defending the traditional view of Mary Magdalene, which held that she appeared in three separate places in the New Testament. The first appearance is the woman described in the Gospel of Luke:

Now one of the Pharisees asked him to dine with him; so he went into the house of the Pharisee and reclined at table. And behold, a woman in the town who was a sinner, upon learning that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment; and standing behind him at his feet, she began to bathe his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment (7:36-38).

Although the woman had not been named by Luke, it was traditionally assumed that it was Mary Magdalene, the same Mary referred to in the next chapter of Luke as follows:

And it came to pass afterwards, that he was journeying through towns and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

And with him were the Twelve, and a certain woman who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary who is called the Magdalene, from whom seven devils had gone out (8:1-2).

There was a third appearance of a Mary in the tenth chapter of Luke, who was also identified with the first two:

Now it came to pass as they were on their journey, that he entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed him to her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also seated herself at the Lord's feet, and listened to his word. But Martha was busy about much serving. And she came up and said, "Lord, is it no concern of thine that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her therefore to help me."

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; and yet only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the best part, and it will not be taken from her (10:38-42).

These three women were all conflated with the Mary Magdalene referred to in all four gospels as playing a major role in the Resurrection story. It is easy to see in the above passages why Mary Magdalene became identified with meditation and prayer, as well as becoming symbolic of the repentant sinner. She became not only the symbol of soli-

tary meditation, but also the symbol of the tearful sinner saved by love. Jacques Lefeure had written a book in which he claimed that the three women referred to in the three passages from Luke were in reality separate women. Fisher defended the single Magdalene theory. In this regard at least, he was committed to the traditional devotion and had a deep emotional attachment to Mary Magdalene:

...Mary Magdalene is an inspiration to sinners like Fisher himself, who, like Albert the Great, here indulges in a bit of allegory: Of the two great luminaries placed by Moses in the sky, the greater of them is the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the lesser over the night is Mary Magdalene...
(Surtz 277).

Fisher is using Mary Magdalene as the lesser light, the moon, more in the sense of a light in the darkness, the true emblem of meditation, such as Henry Vaughan wrote about in his poem "The Night":

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness; as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear;
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim. (lines 49-54)

Vaughan also wrote a poem on Mary Magdalene, in which he used the same theme of Mary Magdalene's light ruling the

darkness:

Her art! whose pensive, weeping eyes,
 Were once sin's loose and tempting spies,
 But now are fixed stars, whose light
 Helps such dark stragglers to their sight.

(lines 57-60)

Mary Magdalene is to Fisher, as to Vaughan, the type of the repentant sinner who through her tears and love for Christ comes to reflection, and meditates deeply in the night, but the night of "dazzling darkness". Lefeure was not convinced by any of Fisher's three books, and neither are modern scholars, most of whom agree with Lefeure.

Fisher also wrote a defense of the Eucharist in 1527 which Surtz considers to be his theological masterpiece (Surtz 337). Ulrich Velene of Minden published a book in 1522 "claiming to prove that St. Peter could not have been at Rome and therefore the claims of the popes to be his successors was an idle boast" (Reynolds 86). Fisher wrote a response proving that Peter had been at Rome. He wrote a treatise on prayer (Tractatus de orando deum), which was one of the few works of his which was translated into English in the sixteenth century. A translation, possibly made by Richard Hall (Cunningham 33), or by Viscount Montague of Cowdry (Reynolds 293), was published in 1560.

Fisher, like so many other scholars in the sixteenth century, became embroiled in the divorce controversy sur-

rounding Henry VIII's attempt to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Bolyn. He estimated that he wrote at least five books in Latin defending the legality of the Pope's dispensation, hence the validity of the marriage between Catherine and Henry. He remained an advisor to Catherine even after it became dangerous to do so. He also wrote a defense of the Catholic priesthood which had come under attack by Martin Luther. All told, Fisher's polemical writing constitutes fourteen separate books in Latin, amounting to some 800,000 words (Bradshaw 10). It is very possible that Fisher wrote other works, in both Latin and English, which were destroyed by the agents of Henry VIII after Fisher's imprisonment.⁸

John Fisher's English works were few in number compared to the volume of his Latin works. He wrote a series of ten sermons on the seven penitential psalms, which were delivered in August and September of 1504 and printed in June of 1508 (Surtz 238). Published as The Treatise Concernynge the Fruytful Saynges of Davyd in the Seven Penytencyall Psalmes, this work is "thoroughly traditional" because "the sermon's forms and methods of biblical exposition which it employs derive from patristic and medieval sources" (Lawlor 99). These sermons form the bulk of Fisher's English writings. According to Lawlor, these sermons set forth a Scala Perfectionis similar to the one set forth by Walter Hilton in the fourteenth century (101) leading to the reunion of the

individual soul with the Trinity (102) and the restoration in the soul of "a new interior paradise" which restores its baptismal innocence (123). Fisher wrote a funeral sermon for Henry VII which was delivered in 1509, and a funeral sermon for the mother of Henry which was delivered in the same year.

Fisher depicts Henry VII as the penitent sinner who washes away his sins before he dies by the use of copious tears. He compares the Lady Margaret to the Martha mentioned in the New Testament, in the service of Christ and her fellow man. He preached two sermons in November 1520 which were published in 1532. The first sermon contains Fisher's famous comparison of the Field of the Cloth of Gold to the pleasures of Heaven. The Field of the Cloth of Gold refers to the historic meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I, which Fisher attended as chaplain to Catherine (Murphy 5). The meeting was held in Picardy in 1520 and was noted for its "ostentatious displays of riches and magnificence" in which the French and English parties lived under "hundreds of pavilions of golden cloth" (Murphy 5). In his sermon, Fisher uses this splendor to contrast the pretended joys of earth with the real joys of Heaven. The second sermon is a discussion of the first sin of Adam, his expulsion from Paradise, and the need for man to repent of sin and perform good works if he hopes to go to Heaven, the "real" Field of the Cloth of Gold. Fisher's final three

English works are the two works that he wrote while he was in the Tower of London, "A Spiritual Consolation" and "The Wayes to Perfect Religion," and a Good Friday sermon which was published with these two devotional pieces.

Fisher was summoned to London and was offered the Oath of Succession on April 13, 1534. He refused the Oath and was given four days to think it over. On April 17, when he was again offered the Oath and again refused, he was committed to the Tower of London. Although the terms of his imprisonment were not as harsh as those for later Catholics imprisoned during Elizabeth's reign, it was to an elderly man in poor health a difficult experience. The only books he was allowed were a New Testament and his breviary. It was customary in Fisher's day for a prisoner, if he wanted more than a starvation diet, to pay for his own upkeep. Fisher was deprived of his bishopric shortly after he was sent to the Tower and he had given away most of his estate prior to his imprisonment, so he was dependent upon the charity of friends for food and clothing. Perhaps he suffered most as a result of being deprived of the sacraments. He was not permitted to attend Mass or talk to another priest. The terms of his imprisonment were so harsh that he was driven to write a letter to Cromwell asking for relief. This letter was written on December 22, 1534, after he had been in prison for eight months, and gives the clearest picture of the conditions of Fisher's imprisonment:

...I byseche yow to be gode master unto me in my necessite; for I have neither shirt nor sute, nor yett other clothes, that ar necessary for me to wear, but that bee ragged and rent to shamefully. Notwithstanding I might easily suffer that, if thei wold keep my body warm. Butt my dyett allso, God knoweth how slendar it is at meny tymes, and now in myn age my stomak may nott alwaye but with a few kynd of meates, which if I want I decaye forthwith, and fall in to coages and diseases of my bodye, and kan not keep myself in health. And ass our Lord knoweth, I have nothyng laft un to me for to provide any better, butt ass my brother of his own purs layeth out for me to his great hynderance. Wherefoor, gode master secretarye, eftsones I beseche you to have sum pittee uppon me, and latt me have such thyngs ass ar necessary for me in myn age, and specially for my health.

And allso that it may pleas you by your hygh wysdom, to move the Kyng's Highnesse to take me unto his gracious favor agane, and to restore me unto my liberty, out of this cold and paynefull emprysonment; whearby ye shall fynd me to be your pore beadsman for ever unto Allmighty God, who ever have you in his protection and custody.

Other twayne thyngs I mustt allso desyer
 uppon yow: that oon is, that itt may pleas yow
 that I may borow sum bowks to styr my devotion mor
 effectuely thes hooly dayes for the comforth of
 my sowl. This I byseche yow to grant me of your
 charitie. And thus our Lord send you a mery
 Christenmass and a comforthable to your harts
 desyer (Quoted in Reynolds 290-292).

We note in the letter Fisher's rather pathetic hope that he might be restored unto the King's favor and his request for that which he no doubt missed the most--spiritual nourishment. Unfortunately for Fisher, his request fell on deaf ears. It is perhaps more difficult to see the human side of Fisher than it is to see the human side of More. More has left us with personal insights in his writings. He has shown us his own fear and doubts about his ability to endure pain and death. Fisher has left us with no such insights, so we have to read between the lines of his letter to get some idea of how imprisonment was wearing away at him. Because so much of the early biography of Fisher is hagiographic in nature, we tend to see him already as an old man, long past the time when doubt and fear could take their toll on him, settled in his sanctity and unperturbed by his impending death. Yet this letter upsets any such comfortable picture. We see Fisher in doubt, one who is grasping at what is certainly a vain hope. The long days

in prison could wear down even a young man; the long afternoons might produce melancholy and the long nights fear.

J.J. Scarisbrick has proposed the interesting theory that the terms of Fisher's imprisonment were so harsh for the simple reason that Henry was trying to kill him off without having to execute him: "But once again Fisher defied the King and refused to die a convenient natural death" (Scarisbrick 166).

At first, he was not allowed any books or writing materials (Reynolds 226), although at some point this restriction was softened, for in his early imprisonment he wrote the two devotional works referred to above. These works were, according to Reynolds, his "testament, the fruit of a lifetime of meditation" (254). Samuel Johnson said that nothing so braces the mind as knowing that one will be executed shortly. This is true of Fisher's Tower works. As the Duke of Norfolk told Thomas More, "For, by Gods body, Master More, Indignatio principis mors est" (Roper 237). What was true for More was also true for Fisher. Although Parliament had tried to soften the penalty for refusing to take the Oath of Succession by adding the word "maliciously" -- that is, one had to refuse maliciously to take the Oath -- yet, for all practical purposes, the word was useless in application, since the King or his ministers could decide when one was malicious.

Lawlor describes the prison works of Fisher as follows:

Written in old age and infirmity, and in truly pitiable circumstances, the tracts achieve a kind of austere serenity which, though always conscious of man's sinfulness, places final trust in the mercy of God. They are the most moving revelations of the quality of Fisher's spiritual life (156).

Lawlor thus recognizes the nature of finality that breathes through these works. They represent Fisher's considered thought, what he believed to be of ultimate importance, unmotivated by any thought of gain or preferment. The only thing that awaited him was the scaffold.

Fisher cultivated a style which was elegant but severe, thus suitable for an educator and bishop. Lewis, in his Sixteenth Century English Literature, referred to Fisher's style as "grave" and indicated that Fisher avoided the "comic" in his writing (161). Lewis praised him for his "mildly rhetorical" efforts and pointed out that at times he could be truly eloquent (161). One of Fisher's strongest features, according to Lewis, was his extended comparisons, which, if he had written them in verse, would have constituted "what we call metaphysical poetry" (162). Yet Fisher's worse defect is his tendency to be diffuse:

His chief weakness is that he is too leisurely: he is in no hurry to end a sentence or let an idea

go...At times, his love of elaboration leads him into something like absurdity (162).

All in all, though, "some of the medieval sweetness and richness still hangs about the prose of Fisher" (162).

George Krapp indicated that Fisher cultivated the Ciceronian style, which was suitable for a preacher "who was famous in his day for eloquence" (166). His style made him "the proper official spokesman of the Church on formal public occasions" (166). Fisher cultivated the words suitable for an orator:

Of the several types of discourse, Fisher cultivated the one most conveniently described as Ciceronian. Very little evidence of direct imitation of Cicero can be found in his sermons, but it was the general effect of the ceremonial, ritual Latin style which he endeavored to reproduce in English (167).

Fisher's diffuseness and love of elaboration Mueller finds to be style "pleonastic" and "rhetorical" (171), which he finds to be indicative of "ecclesiastical authority" in the sixteenth century (174). It was not the plain and simple style practiced by the Lollards, for example, but one which was serious and elaborate, suitable for a spokesman of the Church.

The following excerpt from The Waves to Perfect Religion will show some of the best features of Fisher's prose

style:

God made this world by the onely comaundement of his mouth, and gave to the herbes and all other creatures their vertue,& might that they have. And may also by his power save & dampne creatures eyther to lifte them up bodie and soule into heavens above, or els to throw them downe into ever durning payns of hell. If ye doubt of his wisdom behold all this world, and consider how every creature is set with an other, and every of they by him selfe, how the heavens are apparelled with starres, the ayre with foules, the water with Fishes, the earth with herbes, trees & beastes, how the stars be clad with light, the Foules with feathers, the fish with scales, the beastes with heare, herbes & trees with leaves, & flowers with scent, wherin doth wel appear a great & marvelous wisdom of him that made them. Finally his good and gentil manner is all full of pleasures & comfort so kinde, so friendly, so liberall & beneficial, so pittious and merciful, so readie in all opportunities, so mindfull & circumspect, so dulcet & sweet in communication (377).

What stands out in this quotation is Fisher's characteristic device of the careful elaboration of an image with balanced phrases and clauses, as well as the ever-present

use of doublets. In the second sentence, Fisher introduces a clause which contains a doublet, "save & dampne". This doublet is split in the following two clauses, with one clause devoted to each half of the doublet in a balanced construction. Souls can be lifted up into heaven or thrown down into Hell. The third sentence elaborates on the image by cataloguing the types and kinds of creatures on the earth, and this catalogue displays the power of God. Fisher mentions the stars, the birds, the fish, the herbs, the trees, and the beasts, as representative of all things above the earth and on the earth. In the elaboration of this image, he devotes a phrase to each item in the catalogue - "the heavens are apparelled with starres", "the ayre with Foules", "the water with Fishes", and so on. Thus he introduces an image and elaborates it in a balanced construction. Finally, in his last sentence, he provides doublets for elegant phrasing - "good & gentil maner", "full of pleasure and comfort", "so pittious and mercifull", "so mindfull & circumspect", and "so dulcet & sweet". It is this type of style that is associated with the Ciceronian, and is typical of a grave and learned preacher. Yet it is also worthy of note that Fisher's vocabulary is relatively simple and non-Latinate. With the possible exception of "dulcet" above, the words chosen would have been familiar to his audience and readily understood.

Both of Fisher's Tower works were addressed to his sister, Elizabeth White, who was a nun in the Dominican house at Dartford in Kent. This places them in the mainstream of traditional consolatory prose on several counts. The two traditional forms of consolatory prose are the letter and the dialogue; the letter was the form chosen by Fisher, and the dialogue was chosen by More. The dialogue goes back as far as Plato's Phaedo or Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, both inspired by similar motives. They represent not only a restatement of the writer's traditional beliefs but a statement of what he is dying for, a summing up of his life. The letter of consolation goes back as far as Paul's Epistles or some of the letters of Seneca. Not only are they written to encourage one to persist in one's beliefs despite the miscarriages of justice or fortune, but they also hold out the hope of eventual triumph. The dialogue is the more conscious imitation of a literary tradition, while the letter is the more natural form. Richard Rex has commented on Fisher's method of composition:

...most of Fisher's works, whether devotional or polemical, seem to have been written or published at the request of others. He may have been, as Erasmus remarked, a man who did not cool down easily once he had warmed up, but he also seems to have been a man who needed a spark from someone else to set him ablaze (113).

Therefore, it is quite possible that his sister requested these letters from him. She, too, was no doubt skeptical about his chances of ever being released from prison and may have been seeking his final testimonial, a sort of written relic.

The fact that Fisher's Tower works are addressed to his sister, a nun in Dartford, places them in another tradition of English devotional works. R. W. Chambers, in his seminal study, On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School, has described devotional treatises written to cloistered women as a traditional English genre (cxxiii). According to Chambers, this genre preserved and advanced English prose style during "the darkest period of our literature" (xcvii) when English threatened to disappear beneath the onslaught of French and Latin. French verse became the staple of English writing, but English prose was preserved in devotional works:

But the essential thing is, that side by side with French verse, we have the continuation of the English prose homily tradition and tradition of books written for recluses, especially women, in English prose (xciv).

Chambers then goes on to cite the Vernon Manuscript in the Bodleian Library as demonstrating the prevalence and importance of this genre.

Here, in a vast volume written towards the end of Chaucer's life, we find the text of the Ancren Riwe modernized in language, but in substance the same treatise which had been addressed to the three recluses centuries before. We find a text of Rolle's epistle, "Thou that list love, harken and hear of love: in the song of love it is written, 'I sleep and my heart wakes'" addressed to a nun of Yedinghan; Rolle's Commandment, written to a nun in Hampole; Rolle's Form of Living, written "to a recluse that was clepet Margarete," that is to say, Hampole's disciple, Margaret Kirkby. Rolle had died a generation before the writing of the Vernon MS. And we find also the earliest version of the Scale of Perfection, addressed by Walter Hilton to his "Ghostly Sister in Jesu Christ" (cxxii-cxiii).

Chambers argues, no doubt rightly, that the existence of these five treatises written over the course of two centuries, with the earliest going back to the twelfth century, establishes the existence of a genre of English prose consisting of "treatises addressed to cloistered women"

(cxiii)⁹ These treatises were part of a larger tradition and a greater genre, the devotional treatise written to the cloistered in general. Perhaps the best known example is The Cloud of Unknowing, written as a book of instruction in

the contemplative life to the author's fellow religious. In such works, especially those addressed to women, Latin, the common language of medieval devotional works, could have been a problem, since women often could not read Latin. We have the examples of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kemp, both of whom dictated their works in English. M.L. del Mastro cites the case of the recluse, Lady Margarete Heselington, who requested Richard Misyn, the Carmelite prior of Lincoln, to translate two of Rolle's Latin treatises into English for those "who do not understand the intricacies of Latin" (25). Fisher's Tower works were in the direct line of this English genre. He addressed the works to his sister, a woman religious living the cloistered life, and he wrote them in English, two of the few works, other than sermons, that he ever composed in English. No doubt he composed them in English for the same reason that Richard Rolle composed some of his devotional works in English: the nuns could not understand Latin, or at least some of them could not.

James Walsh finds another traditional element in English devotional prose, one which offers an interesting insight into the Tower works of Fisher and More. Walsh comments that English devotional writers of the Middle Ages wrote from a stance of isolation, at least as compared to most Continental writers, who wrote from a position of shared solidarity or promotion by the order to which they

belonged. Walsh also comments that English devotional writers were extremely orthodox; heresy was never an issue in their works:

If we look at the manifestations of English religious life round about the year 1400, we at once see two characteristics which make it different from what was happening on the Continent. There was no one spiritual writer or teacher tainted or associated with heresy, and most of them were virtually independent of organized religious life. In Europe, the tendency was usually toward coalescence, towards the absorption of individual talents into religious orders, and to the promotion by the orders of characteristic patterns of devotion and enthusiasm; and this was true of women as of men, ...there are few among the great men who enriched and transformed spiritual life in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who were not religious, whose orders did not promote the knowledge of their teachings. Only Walter Hilton in this country lived so; Richard Rolle and Julian were solitaries, and the author of The Cloud, whoever he may have been, seems to have produced his works in defiance of the disapproval of members of his community, whichever it was. Among the minor figures, too, it is striking how many of

them had chosen an anchoritic way of life...This seeking for isolation is surely a trait for the beginnings of which we should look to Anglo-Saxon times (17-18).

It is curious how well Fisher and More illustrate this principle in their Tower works. They were not only isolated, but they were defending orthodoxy from what they perceived to be the heretical attack posed by the Oath of Succession. This seeking of isolation, of writing from a position of uniqueness, represents, according to Walsh, an English hallmark in devotional prose. Fisher and More fit neatly into this category, even though their aloneness was not freely chosen but was imposed upon them. Fisher was more isolated than More, especially in an intellectual sense. Both were allowed visitors at first, but their time was mainly spent alone. Fisher was not allowed any books, except for his breviary and a New Testament, and perhaps a few others. In his works of devotion written in the Tower, the element of aloneness comes through. There is a simple and pristine quality about the writing, which is no doubt partly attributable to the fact that he had no books to refer to and was writing from memory. His mind was operating upon its own resources, except for those which had been absorbed and digested in its inner recesses. Since he was alone and not living in a medium of intellectual interchange and cross-stimulation, the desire to please and impress is

left behind, and a certain personal quality, a certain freshness, seems to come through the pages. This is perhaps the quality that Walsh was referring to as the hallmark or English devotional prose; it is a quality of Fisher's final devotional writings.

Fisher's aloneness began even before he was imprisoned. He was never known as a convivial man; he was too devoted to prayer and meditation to find time for entertainment. His early biographer referred to his residence at Rochester as a monastery (Hughes 38), and he was known to withdraw from company early in the evening after only a short time, so he could return to his library for devotional reading, or to his chapel for prayer. As he grew older, he grew increasingly out of touch with the historical times in which he lived. Macklen comments on this picture of Fisher as the increasingly isolated figure in times of rapid and often unwanted change:

He was now 55 years old, an advanced age for the time, and during the winter of 1524 he suffered the first of many illnesses that were to dog him for the rest of his life. Already he felt himself to be living in an alien world that was becoming more difficult for him to understand with every year that passed....And now a new generation openly denied the authority of the Church and dared to claim that before God each man is his own

priest....In a few short years he found himself at odds with all the dominant forces of time and circumstance. Once he had spoken for the future; and now he spoke with the unmistakable accent of the past (64).

The third aspect of Fisher's Tower works that stands firmly in the tradition of English devotional prose is his focus on the Four Last Things. This focus on the last things has faded in popularity since the time that Fisher wrote and is sometimes dismissed today as a preoccupation with the unpleasant thought of one's own death. However, there is a sense in which thinking upon one's death frees one to live, as has been commented upon by some Existentialists. Dwelling upon death may perhaps be morbid if one does not believe that anything lies beyond death. But this was not true for Fisher. To Fisher, death was passing through a door into what he hoped was a better world. In reading about the Four Last Things, one should read "ultimate" and not just "last". They are the last things in time but the first things in consideration. The existence of the Four Last Things determines one's whole approach to living. If one accepts the Four Last Things as Fisher did, then this acceptance changes all the first things in one's life.

The first of the Four Last Things is death, and Fisher's A Spiritual Consolation is a mediation upon death. It is not really part of the ars moriendi tradition, whose

artistic expression burgeoned in the early fifteenth century (Beaty 1), because it deals more with living well than with dying well. Thus it is more in the tradition of Everyman, the summons of death. One of the earliest treatises in the ars moriendi tradition is The Book of the Craft of Dying, which is a fifteenth century translation of Ars moriendi, and contains considerations for "teaching and comforting them that be in the point of death" (Comper 3). The book deals with the peculiar temptations that dying men face (for example, the temptation to despair), the questions to be asked of the dying (for example, do you know that Christ died for you?), instructions to the dying (ask forgiveness for your sins), and prayers that should be said by the dying. But Fisher's meditation upon death is for the living, for the consideration of one's death allows one to raise devotion and thus live well, and if one lives well, there is a good chance one will die well. This idea is contained in the first line of Fisher's letter:

Sister Elizabeth, nothing doth more help effectuallye to get a good and vertuous life. Then if a soule when it is dull and unlustie without devotion, neyther disposed to prayer, nor to any other good worke, may be sturred or quickened agayne by fruiteful meditacion (E.W. 351). ¹⁰

This meditation that Fisher has in mind is upon death, and he advised his sister to "devise in your mynde as nigh

as you can, all the conditions of a man or woman sodaynllye taken and rauyshed by death..." (351). To Fisher, this meditation is "fruiteful" because it stirs up devotion and leads to a good and virtuous life. So Fisher's meditation is, paradoxically, upon death as a means to a richer life. Fisher recommends that his sister make this meditation in solitude. He advises her never to "reade thys meditation but alone by your selfe in secrete maner, where you maye be most attentye thereunto" (351-352). The third point that Fisher makes is, in a way, a repetition of his first point, to the effect that when she reads this meditation, "you must afore lifte vp your minde to almightie God, and beseech him that by the helpe and succour of his grace the readying thereof may fruitfully worke in your soule a good and vertuous life..." (352). Note that the stress again is on living well, not necessarily on dying well. The next consideration that Fisher proposes to his sister is the thought of the third of the Four Last Things-- that is, hell.

"I must now leave thys mortall bodie, I must nowe departe hence out of this world never to retorne againe into it. But whether I shall goe, or where I shall become, or whay lodgyng I shall have thys night, or in what company I shal fal, or in what countrey I shall be receiued or in what maner I shall be entreated, God knoweth for I knowe not. What if I shall be dampned in the perpetuall

pryson of hell, where be paines endelesse and
without number" (352).

The thought of hell is not a pleasant one, and Fisher dwells
on this thought of hell for a few more lines:

Greevous it shall be to them that be dampned for
ever, for they shall be as men in moste extreame
paynes of death, ever wishing and desirying death,
and yet never shall they dye. I should be nowe
unto mee muche wearie, one yeare continually to
lye upon a bed were it never so soft, how weary
then shall it be to lye in the most painefull fyre
so many thousand of yeares without number? And to
be in that most horrible company of divils most
terrible to beholde, full of malice and crueltie?
(352-353).

Fisher then considers what he hopes will be the last of
things for him -- Heaven:

Many blessed & holy Sayncts were full ioyous and
desirous of this houre, for they knowe well that
by death their soules shuld be translated into a
new life: To the life all ioye and endlesse plea-
sure, from the streightes and bondage of this
wretched world to be above with God in comfort
inestimable that can not be spoken ne thought
(353).

Some readers may find the dwelling upon death and eternal punishment to be morbid, a reflection of the worst that is to be found in late medieval piety. However, it must be pointed out that Heaven was equally real to Fisher, a place as real to him as London or Rochester. Death is not the end of life; hell is not the goal of the Christian; eternal joy is the real point of Fisher's meditation upon death. This eternal joy must be kept in mind as one reads the remainder of the meditation, since it presents in rather direct fashion the traditional contemptus mundi theme. The meditator must see himself on his deathbed, trying the bargain with God: "O woulde to God that I might nowe have some farther respet, and some longer tyme to amend myselfe of my free will and libertie. O if I might entreat death to spare me for a season..." (354). Yet death is implacable, and will be stayed not for "all the ryches of this worlde," nor for all the prayers of "lovers and friends". The meditator remembers all his sins, and all the virtuous deeds he did not do while he was in health and he asks for more time: "For if it shall please my Lorde God that I might any longer live, I would otherwyse exercise my self that I have done before" (355). The meditator tries to encourage those who are still healthy (which of course, includes the meditator himself) to remember their end and live better: "O ye therefore that have and may use thys precyous tyme in your

libertie, imploy it wel, and be not to wastfull thereof, least peradventure when you would have it, it shall be denyed you likewise, as now it is to mee" (355). The meditator remembers all the time he spent trying to satisfy the desires of the flesh and realizes it was wasted time: "I sorrow that so little I regarded the wealth & profit of my soule, but rather tooke heede to the wayne comfortes and pleasures of my wretched bodie" (355). Then follows a condemnation of the pleasures of the flesh and the world in the best contemptus mundi tradition:

O corruptivle bodie, O stinking carion, O rotten earth to whom I have served, whose appetities I have followed, whose desire I have procured, now doest thou appeare what thou arte in thy own likenesse (356).

It is only at the point of death that earthly pleasures can be seen for what they truly are, fleeting moments which cannot accompany the soul in death. It is the same lesson that Everyman learns: "All erthly thynges is but vanyte./ Beaute, Strenght, and Dyscrecyon do man forsake,/ Follysshe frendes, and jynnesmen, that fayre spake--/ All fleeth save Good Dedes" (lines 870-873). The meditator in Fisher's work learns that all is corruption and vanity: "Corruption was thy beginnyng in the wombe of they mother, and corruption is thy continuance. All that ever thou receyuest, were it never so precyous, thou turnest into corruption, and naught

came from thee at any tyme but corruption, and now to corruption thy selfe returnest...(356). He compares his appearance to "painting or a gilding uppon an earthen wal, under it...covered with stinking & filthy matter" (356-357).

The meditator realizes that he has spent most of his life trying to procure "cloathes of divers colours", or attain "delectable hearinges" or "goodlye smelles", or "delectable lodgings"; these things were his "vaine and naughtie studie" (357). He now realizes that these things benefitted his body but not his soul. He comes to the conclusion, like Everyman, that only good deeds can be his comfort and accompany him. "For assuredly no deede that is be it never so little, but it shall be rewarded of almightie God. One draught of water given for the love of God, shall not be unrewarded..." (355). Fisher ends the meditation with an exhortation to the reader not to be neglectful of his last end as he was himself:

O yee that have time and space to make your-provision against the houre of death, defarre not from day to day lyke as I have done...And therefore delay it not as I have done, but before all other businesse put this first in suertie, which oughte to be chieefe and princypall businesse. Neyther buildying of Colleges, nor makying of Sermons, nor giving of almes, neyther yet anye other manner of buzynesse shall helpe you without

this (362).

The reference to the building of colleges, giving of alms, and making of sermons is surely personal references to Fisher's own life, since these are the very things he is most noted for.

Fisher's second Tower work is The wayes to perfect Religion, also addressed to his sister, Elizabeth. His first letter was meant to heighten devotion through a meditation upon death; his second letter is meant to increase delight in the religious life by showing the soul how to arrive at the love of God, for "love maketh everie worke appeare easie and pleasaunt, though it bee ryghte displeasaunt of it selfe" (E.W. 364). Fisher admits that even virtuous deeds "seeme laboryous and paynefull" without love as a motivating force. So it is to inspire love for God in the soul that Fisher proposes certain considerations to his sister. First, though, Fisher uses the analogy of the hunter pursuing its game as representing the Christian soul in pursuit of God. No trials, or difficulties, or hardships, or conditions of weather or terrain, interfere with the hunter's desire to catch his quarry. It is due to his love of the sport that he is so assiduous; he does not even notice the hardships or difficulties:

This thing may wel appear by the lyfe of hunters,
the which out of doubt is more laborious and pain-
full that is the lyfe of a relygious persons, and

yet nothing sustayneth them in theyr labour and paynes, but the earnest love and hartie desire to fynde theyr game (364).

Fisher then closes the analogy by reminding his sister that Christians are hunters, too:

Regard no lesse my writing, good sister, though to my purpose I use the example of hunters, for all true christian soules be called Hunters, and their office and duetie is to seeke and hunt for to fynde Christ Iesu (364).

He carries the analogy in great detail over some four pages, describing the labors and trials of the hunter in pursuit of game. He indicates that Scripture holds that the Christian soul must similarly seek after Christ. One is reminded here of the Song of Songs, that book popular with so many medieval monastics and ascetics, such as Bernard of Clairvaux. Fisher seems to quote from the Song of Songs, rather than St. Paul whom he mentions by name:

That is to say, he will be founde of them that-seeke hym, well happy are all those that canfynde him, or can have any sent of him in thislife here. For that sent (as Saint Paule saith) is the sent of verie lyfe. And the devout souleswhere they feelee thys sent, they runne after hyma pace. Curremus in odorem ungeuntorum tuorum. That is to say, we shall runne after the sent of thy sweete

oyntmentes (365).

St. Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians of running a race for a prize and exhorts his readers to run, but does not mention perfume. This reference to perfume is found in the Song of Songs: "Your name spoken is a spreading perfume--that is why the maidens love you" (1:14). The Vulgate reads: "fraglantia unguentis optimis/ oleum effusum nomen tuum/ ideo adulescentulae dilexerunt te/ trahe me post te curremus." One can see that the two quotes do not match up, so it is very possible that Fisher got his verse, not directly from the Vulgate, but the Vulgate as filtered through St. Bernard. Bernard, in his 21st Sermon on the Song of Songs, has the following version as translated by Kilian Walsh: "Draw me after you; we shall run in the odor of your ointments" (3). At least in translation, Bernard's version is closer to Fisher's version than the original Vulgate.

The attraction of this ancient Hebrew wedding song, celebrating the physical love between the bride and the bridegroom, for celibate monks and priests throughout the Middle Ages, is a fascinating aspect of spiritual writing. The Song of Songs was allegorized to represent the love of Christ for the individual soul. Yet there is probably as much analogy as allegory. The early spiritual writers, such as Bernard, would say perhaps that a wedding song is appropriate for expressing the love between Christ and the human soul, because the union of Christ with the soul was

referred to as a form of marriage, the "mystical marriage". The analogy is based on the fact that the love of Christ is as intense and as physically consuming as the love of the bridegroom for the bride.

The analogy of Christ as the prey and the Christian as the hunter is also very similar to the terms found in the Song of Songs. The bride in describing the bridegroom refers to him as a "gazelle" or a "young wild goat" (2:9-10). Later she says that she has sought her true love but has not found him ("On my bed at night I sought him whom my heart loves--I sought him but I did not find him" 3:1). The bridegroom refers to his bride as a "dove" which hides "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff" (2:14). All three images--the searcher (or hunter), the game, and the perfume--are brought together in the final verse of the Song of Songs: "Be swift, my lover, like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices!" (8:14). Fisher's image of the hunter in pursuit of game echoes the Song of Songs, and it is appropriate that it should, for Fisher is writing to evoke love for God, and union with God has been traditionally referred to as the mystical marriage.

The first consideration that Fisher proposes to his sister to inspire in her the love of God is her own existence, which is a free gift from God. In this consideration, Fisher is in the mainstream of traditional Christian philosophy, and its fascination with the category of exis-

tence itself:

First consider by your owne mynde and reason, that almightie God of his owne singular goodnesse & free will dyd create you and make you of naught, whereunto he was not bounde by any necessitie, nor drawn by any commoditie that might tyse uppou him by your creation (E.W. 369).

Fisher reminds her that God might as easily have "lefte you also unmade, and never have put his hande to the making of you, if he had so would" (369). Fisher claims that there are far more "creatures" which have been left uncreated than there are that have been actually created, so his sister is doubly lucky.

This stress on the sheer wonder of creation, especially one's own creation, is a traditional position. Aquinas established existence itself as the greatest category, and the greatest quality a thing might have. In his metaphysics, he focused attention on the idea of existence itself. It was in philosophy such as his that the philosopher saw that a thing could as easily "not be" as "be", and thus pointed out the utter contingency of being, as well as the total wonder that something existed at all:

The act of being (esse) that I am talking about is the most perfect of all things....Hence it is clear that this item that I call actual being (esse) is the actuality of all act, and for this

reason is the perfection of all perfections
(Aquinas 154).

Actual existence is the most perfect category that the philosopher can ascribe to anything. Aquinas goes on to mention Pseudo-Dionysus to the effect that living things are more important than merely existing things, "still to be is more noble than to live; for, living things do not merely possess life: right along with life they have actual being" (Aquinas 155). This fascination with sheer existence, apart from any accidents or essences, is illustrated by Pseudo-Dionysus, who stands at the beginning, along with Augustine, of Christian philosophy:

Being precedes the entities which participate in it. Being in itself is more revered than the being of Life itself and Wisdom itself and likeness to divinity itself. Whatever beings participate in these things must, before all else, participate in Being (The Divine Names 99).

Pseudo-Dionysus then, much like Fisher later, tries to inspire the love of God in the soul by the consideration the being and, by implication, one's own being:

The first gift therefore of the absolutely transcendent Goodness is the gift of being, and that Goodness is praised from those that first and principally have a share of being. From it and in it are Being itself, the source of all beings, all

beings and whatever else has a portion of existence. This characteristic is in it as an irrepressible, comprehensive, and singular feature
(99)

To Fisher, as to Pseudo-Dionysius before him, the meditation upon existence itself, upon one's own existence itself, leads naturally to reverence for the source of all creation, of all existence, the Divine Goodness. As Augustine, in his Confessions, lyrically pointed out:

Also, Lord, in my inner ear I have heard your voice loud and strong telling me that all natures and all substances, which are not what you are but which nevertheless exist, are created by you
(Augustine 291).

And also, much like Fisher, Augustine plays with the thought of non-existence, and contrasts it with existence, and thus establishes two great over-arching categories, being and non-being, and the consideration of non-being highlights the wonder of being: "Only what does not exist is not from you" (Augustine 291). In fact, Augustine deigns the will as sinful because it moves away from God, who is full existence, towards something which has less existence (291). Augustine compares existence and non-existence to light and darkness. The wonder of light cannot really be appreciated until it is compared to the darkness. This is the first step in the true comprehension of light, as it is for exis-

tence. The comparison of degrees of light, or degrees of existence, comes later, after one has seen the true wonder of light itself, or being itself. Bonaventure makes the same point in his Itinerarium Mentis in Deum:

One is struck by the blindness of the intellect which does not consider what it first sees, that without which it could understand nothing. But, as the eye sees various shades of color without noticing the light which helps it see everything or seeing the light pays no attention to it, so the eye of the mind, intent of particular or general orders of being, fails to notice Being itself, which is beyond every classification, although it is this Being which first meets the mind and in it everything else is known. How true it is that "as the eye of the bat acts in the light of the day so the eye of the mind acts in the obvious light of nature" (Aristotle). Habituated as the mind is to the darkness of things and fascinated with the sensible world when it sees the light of Being itself it thinks it sees nothing not understanding that this darkness is the highest illumination of the mind just as when the eye sees pure light it thinks it sees nothing (73).

Robert Bellarmine, in one of his meditations on The Ladder of Created Things in 1615, in which he follows Bonaventure, makes the same comparison between being and non-being when he considers his own existence: "I ask you, my soul, who gave you your existence, since a little time ago you were nothing?" (56). This same point, the consideration of existence itself and the wonder of one's own existence when compared to non-existence, as the first step in the devotional life, continued beyond Fisher and found expression in the Sermons of John Donne. In exhorting his hearers to a belief in the resurrection of the body on the last day, Donne points out that God can easily raise the body from whatever dust it has turned into by the simple act of His will, since He made the body out of nothing to begin with: Thou that was once nothing, wast made this that thou art now; and when thou shalt be nothing againe, thou shalt be made better than thou art now" (III,3,97). Donne, too, meditates upon the wonder of creation and points out that creation itself was the wondrous work, the most difficult work for God, and whatever other miracles God may work, they are far easier than the original work of creation:

Our reason tells us, that in all God's works, in all his materiall works, still his latter works are easier than his former. The Creation, which was the first, and was the mere production out of nothing, was the hardest of all. The specifica-

tion of Creatures, and the disposing of them, into their severall kinds, the making of that which was made something of nothing before, a particular thing, a beast, a fowle, a fish, a plant, a man, a Sun or Moon, was not so hard, as the first production out of nothing (III,3,96).

Donne also exhorts his hearers to consider the wonder of their own existence, that the greatest miracle they know of is their own creation from nothing. And Donne continues the contrast between being and non-being that played such an important role in Christian metaphysics from the beginning:

There is nothing more contrary to God, and his proceedings, than annihilation, to Bee nothing, Do nothing, Think nothing. It is not so high a step, to raise the needy from the dunghill, and set him with Princes, To make a King of a Beggar is not so much as to make a Worm of nothing. Whatsoever God hath made thee since, yet his greatest work upon thee, was, that he made thee;and howsoever he extend his bounty in preferring thee, yet his greatest largenesse, is, in preserving thee in thy Beeing. And therefore, his own name of Majesty, is Jehovah, which denotes his Essence, his Being. And it is usefully moved, and safely resolved in the School, that the devill himself cannot deliberately wish himself nothing. Suddenly a man may

wish himself nothing, because that seemes to deliver him from the sense of his present misery; but deliberately he cannot, because whatsoever a man wishes, must be something better than he hath yet; and whatsoever is better is not nothing (IV,2,85).

The second consideration that Fisher proposes to his sister for engendering the love of God in her soul is the importance of her creation as a human being and not something else:

The second consideration is this, where there is manye maner of beings, some creatures have a goodly beeying, some have an ungodly being. It is a more goodly beinge Margarite of a precious stone, then of a peble stone, or the fayre bright golde, then of rustie iron, of a goodly Fesaund then of a venemous Serpent, of a prettie Faune then of a foule Toade, or a reasonable soule, then of an unreasonable beast. And it is not be doubted by almightie God might have given to any of them, what being so ever he woulde, & might have transformed eche of those into the nature and kynde of any of the other at hys pleasure and will...And in likewise me or you or any other man or woman, he might have made a stone or a Serpent, or a Toad, for his pleasure (E.W. 370).

It is this particular discussion that makes C.S. Lewis doubt the intellectual depth of Fisher's mind. In his English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, he makes the following comment:

In the Perfect Religion, the Nun is very properly encouraged to be thankful that God created her in a Christian society; this is well. She is also to be thankful that He created her at all; it is still well and orthodox, but troublesome questions are drawing near. She is to be especially grateful to God for making her a human being when He might have made her a stone or a toad. Made whom or what a stone or a toad? (162).

Lewis considers these concerns with possibly not being what one is, or being something different than what one is, as "troublesome questions":

He would be a bold man who blamed Fisher for not solving these questions; the trouble is that he does not seem to know that he is raising them. His sincerity is undoubted; but while his heart is earnest, his intellect is perhaps not so hard at work as he supposes (162).

This judgement may be a little harsh. Fisher is, after all, not writing as a philosopher. His work is aimed, not at the intellect, but rather at the affections. His purpose is to provoke devotion, not satisfy the intellect; stimulate the

soul to the love of God and not the mind to clear speculation. There is a way in which this line of Fisher's thought can be seen as doing just that.

In posing these questions Fisher was not supposing them to have "logical" answers. It is true that if one had been made a toad rather than a human being then one would not be the same being. It is also true that there is only a remote possibility of a toad ever reflecting on its not being human. It is conceivable, however, that a human being could regret not being an angel. It is equally possible that if pursued long enough and in the meditative and devotional manner Fisher suggests, these "troublesome questions" may very well function as a koan does in Zen Buddhist thought.

The whole purpose of the koan is to deflate the logical intellect, the rational mind, and leave the alogical mind open to enlightenment. It is quite possible that Fisher's "troublesome questions" would do the same. Regardless, Fisher is making reference to a Renaissance truism, the hierarchy of creation, and the nobleness of man who stands at the top of the ladder of creation. For this, a man should be grateful, much as the Psalmist declares: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." It is to the Great Chain of Being that Fisher is calling his sister's attention and her remarkable place on that Chain. "And thank your Lord God," he tells her, "that hath given you a more excellent nature, yea, such a nature as excelleth in noblenesse, in dignitie,

all other bodilie natures: For it is made to the verie lykenesse and Image of almightie God; whereunto none other bodily creatures doth reach neere" (E.W. 370). Perhaps Fisher is being consistent, regardless of how strange it may sound. Just as one can only appreciate one's own existence if one considers the alternative of non-existence, so perhaps one can only appreciate one's humanness if one compares it to "toadness". Donne uses the same type of consideration when he comments on the ease with which God can resurrect our bodies:

Howsoever it be, if thine imagination could carry thee so low, as to thinke, not onely that thou wert become some other thing, a fish, or a dogge that fed upon thee, and so, thou couldst not have thine own body, but therewithall must have his body too, but that thou wert infinitely farther gone, that thou wert annihilated, become nothing, canst thou chuse but thinke God as perfect now, at least as he was at first, and can hee not as easily make thee up againe of nothing, as he made thee of nothing at first? (III,3,97).

If Donne can imagine a man becoming a fish or a dog, why cannot Fisher imagine his sister a toad? As Donne points out, he is speaking imaginatively, not logically, and he is using the imagination to support devotion, not speculating for its own sake.

Fisher's third consideration is the realization that his sister was born in a Christian land rather than a pagan one, because Fisher believed that Christianity is the only certain path to salvation, and salvation was necessary due to original sin.

The third consideration is this, that were notwithstanding this great and excelent gyft you nevertheless by the reason of originall sinne wherewith you were born of your mother into this world, had lost the great inheritaunce above in heaven, and purchased everlasting imprisonment in hell, he of his great and singular goodnesse had provyded you to be borne within the precinctes of Christendeome, where you have bene instructed in the doctrine of hys fayth, and receyved the holy Sacrament of baptisme, and have beene made a christian woman, whereby you dyd receyve againe your inherytaunce before lost, and have escaped the most horrible daunger of everlasting dampnation. (E.W. 371).

Fisher, a student of Thomas Aquinas, would no doubt have believed that it was possible for virtuous pagans to be saved, but it would have been far more difficult. There is also here shown that pride in being born in "Christendeome", that sense of solidarity and unity felt by many Christians throughout the Middle Ages.

The fourth consideration proposed by Fisher is gratitude for God's forgiveness of her sins, and especially for the sacrament of Penance, which is the means of God's forgiveness.

The fourth consideration is this, that where sithens that tyme of your baptisme and that you were made a christian woman, you have many tymes unkindly faulne into deadly sinne, an broken hys laws and commaundements, setting at naught all those benefites which he before had given to you following your wretched pleasures, to the great dyspleasure and contempt of his most highe majestie. And yet he furthermore did not strike you, ne yet revenge him selfe uppon you rigorously, punishing the transgressors & breakers of his lawe, as he might and shoulde by his righteousness have done. But contrariwyse he did long spare you by his excellent mercy, and mercifully he did abyde your returne to hym againe by sorrowful repentaunce, and asking of him mercy for your abhominable offences. And where you so dyd with good hartie mynd at anye tyme, he receyved you to his grace, and by the Sacrament of pennaunce you were taken into his favour again, and so they escape the horrible paynes of Hell due for your outrageous unkindnesse...(E.W. 372-3).

When John Fisher wrote these words, one of the greatest privations that he experienced in his imprisonment was the lack of a confessor for him to receive the Sacrament of Penance.

The fifth consideration also concerns the forgiveness of sins, that no matter how many times the soul falls into sin, God has seen fit to grant it forgiveness and restore it to grace. Fisher is very vivid in his description of the horror of sin that is

...so defiling your soule by innumerrable ways,
and making it filthie & more ungodly then is the
Sowe that waltereth hir self in the foule myrie
puddle, and more pestilently stiketh in the sight
of God, then is the stinking carion of a dead
dogge, being rotten and lying in a ditch, yet
nevertheless for all these misbehaviors, your Lord
God of his farre passing goodnes hath called you
agayne from your sinfull life, and hath graciously
stirred your soule to forsake your sin, & leve
this wretched worlde, & enter the holy relygion.
(374).

Fisher was consistent in his detestation of sin. In his commentary penitential psalms he wrote an equally vivid description of the horror of sin:

Moreover if the filthiness of sin be once conceived in the soul, and long continue there by

unhappy custom, it maketh foul and infecteth it more and more; as we see by urine or any other stinking liquor put in a vessel, the longer it be kept in the same, so much more it maketh foul the vessel and corrupteth it. Another example. As we see a boul or botch full of matter and filth, the more and the longer be it hid, the more groweth the corruption and venemous infection of it, and also pierceth to the bones and corrupteth them (23-24).

All these descriptions give imagery of decay and putrefaction, a common feature of fifteenth-century piety. This is exactly what Fisher felt happened to the soul in sin if it did not repent.

The repentant sinner is one of Fisher's favorite themes. He wrote a series of penitential sermons which Surtz called his "literary masterpiece" (238). His literary powers were evoked to the fullest in this, his favorite theme, which is not sin but the mercy of God. He wrote at least three books on the single Magdalene theme, as Mary Magdalene experienced a rebirth of devotion in the Renaissance. The importance of the Magdalene theme is as a figure of the repentant sinner. Mary Magdalene was always associated with tears, because she is associated with the woman in the New Testament who anointed Christ's feet with precious ointment and her tears. Magdalene also represented love;

she was associated with the woman in the New Testament whose sins were forgiven because she had loved much. "Also blessed Mary Magdalene, which heard Christ forgive her sins for the great love she had unto Him, for all that took upon her great penance, ever having in mind the filthiness of her sin committed before" (Hughes 98-99). These two themes--the love of God and sorrow for sin--were united in the figure of Mary Magdalene.¹¹ One has only to think of Margery Kempe to see its popularity. Margery writes, for example, of her first trip to the Holy Land and the effect that seeing Christ's place of crucifixion: "sche was howselyd on the Mount of Calvarye, & then sche wept, sche sobbyd, sche cryed so lowde that it (was) wondyr to heryn it" (71).

Fisher was known for his weeping of copious tears. His early biographer relates that when Fisher said Mass "as many times he used to do, if he were not letted by some urgent and great cause, you might then perceive in him such earnest devotion that many times the tears would fall from his cheeks." (34). In his sermons and other writings Fisher recommended the use of tears for contrition:

Take heed how great the virtue is of weeping tears, that when they be shed from the heart of a true penitent, anon they ascend unto the high throne of Almighty God, and also they be heard in His ear. They be not heard only, but also they be graciously heard. The petition asked by them is

His ear. They be not heard only, but also they be graciously heard. The petition asked by them is granted, and taken into the bosom of the high Majesty of God (Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms 18).

Fisher often used homely examples in his sermons, imagery that the unlettered could understand. In one such example, he compared the soul to a table which must be cleaned:

A soul is compared unto a table whereon nothing was painted, nevertheless with many misdoings and spots of sin we have defiled and made it deformed in the sight of God. Therefore it is needful that it be razed, washed, and wiped. It shall be razed by the inward sorrow and compunction of the heart when we be sorry for our sin. It shall be washed with the tears of our eyes when we acknowledge and confess our sin (18).

All of these tears would wash the soul clean and restore the bonds of love between the soul and God. This was the end desired, and it was joyful to the repentant sinner. "Truly the joy that a true penitent hath is great when he understandeth and knoweth himself to be at liberty from the servitude and danger of sin" (84-85).

Fisher did not see sin as an indiscriminate lump to be cast off at one heave. He saw sin as subtle and devious, and the mercy of God, though readily available, had to be

constantly sought by tears and penance, with the performance of good works. Fisher, despite the fact that he concentrated upon sin and its effects in the human soul, also concentrated upon the mercy of God that was available to all who sought it. For this the Christian needed to be grateful, and he so advised his sister in this fifth consideration. Once the sinner has really seen how persistent and tangled sin is, and how difficult it is to be rescued from its snares, then there is joy to be found in liberation from it.

Fisher was quite adamant about the reality of hell and the sufferings it entailed for every unrepentant sinner:

For they shall be drawn down of the cruel tormentors, the devils, into the deep pit of hell, there to be crucified eternally; where there shall be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth; where also the worm of their conscience shall never die, and that fire shall never be quenched; where also part of their pain shall be in a pit full of burning liquor, and in fire and Brimstone flaming continually (36)

Ultimately, to Fisher, this is a joyful message, not a lugubrious one, and there is a pleasure, although a spiritual one, to be found in its unfolding. For the repentance of sin and its forgiveness operate in the soul, and the soul is a spiritual entity. Fisher is enough of a Platonist to

believe that spiritual acts are higher than physical acts, and hence spiritual pleasures are greater than physical pleasures.

Then thus, since that the virtue and capacity of our soul is far better and more perfect than is the virtue of all our other knowledge, and also of all living creatures beside, and hath Almighty God and godly things the more nigh unto it the clearer that it be purged by due penance; it must needs follow that the penitent hath more sweet joy and gladness inwardly in his soul than any other creature living may have in all the pleasures of this world Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms 37).

The sixth consideration that Fisher proposes for his sister to evoke the love of God is remembrance of "the beautie and goodliness" of Jesus (E.W. 376) Jesus is well worthy of the love that is given him:

...if ye were of that mynd to give your love free, it were good yet there to bestow it, that you should choose suche a one, as both in goodlinesse of person, as also in prowesse & wisdom and good gentil maners may be worthie your love. For if there be any deformitie in him whom you would love, it is an impediment and great let for to love hym; But in our saviour Christ the sonne of

God is no deformitie, for he is all goodlye and
surmounteth all other in goodlynesse... (E.W. 376).

To Fisher, the incarnation is what made love between man and God possible. It is in the expression of this mystery that Fisher rises to some of his highest eloquence, for he is deeply moved by the beauty and nobility of Christ. He tells his sister that " the lykenesse that any person bee, the sooner they may bee knit together in love" (E.W. 377). It is because God became man in Jesus that man is able to love God, because man and God are now alike. "The same lykenes he hath & you have, like body and lyke soul, touching his manhood, your soul is also like unto him in his godhead: For after the Image and similitude of it, your soule is made" (E.W. 377) So God made man's soul in the likeness of God, and Christ made his own body in the likeness of man; this is man and divinity joined in likeness, and love is therefore the appropriate and natural response of man to such likeness.

The notion than man can only love that which is like him in some way is traditional in Christian philosophy. It is found not only in the works of the philosophers, but also in the works of the poets. Edmund Spenser, in "An Hymne of Heavenly Love," expresses the same idea. Writing of the creation of man by God, he has the following stanza:

Such he him made, that he resemble might
Himself, as mortall thing immortall could;

Him to be lord of every living wight
 He made by love out of his owne like mould,
 In whom he might his mightie selfe behould:
 For love doth love the thing belov'd to see,
 That like it selfe in lovely shape may be.

(Lines 113-119)

This notion that the soul loves what is like itself is based on the idea that man cannot love that which he does not know; it is the knowledge of something that evokes love for it. Etienne Gilson, in his discussion of Augustine, writes as follows:

We are, therefore, forced to admit that we never love the unknown. Whenever the soul moves towards an object, it must create a likeness of the object beforehand and it is this representation that it loves, whether it be true or false. It is as though the soul held a picture before it and was quite prepared to accept this as the reward of its efforts. Nor can there be any doubt that it is this image that the soul loves, for if the object does not measure up to it or even surpass it in excellence, the soul may turn from it in disappointment when it is found. What we find is not always what we looked for, and our disappointment shows that the object of our search was not the thing, once unknown and now real, which we

have found, otherwise we should love it no matter what it was; the object of our search was rather the image we formed of the thing beforehand. But if our expectations are fulfilled and the object corresponds to the image our soul kept in view, we do not say to it: "I can love you at last," but rather: "I loved you long ago." Jam te amabam. How true it is that the unknown itself is never the object of our love (98).

To Augustine, when the soul knew something, it took the thing into itself in some way and gave it something of its own substance (Bourke 212). So to know another person there must be similar qualities, something we can clothe with the substance of our own souls. Therefore, in God as with man, we find such a similarity, and we are able to love God because we know him in a way that we could never know a purely spiritual being. Thomas Aquinas also found that love is dependent on knowledge and likeness. "Two of the causes of love, then, for Thomas, are knowledge and goodness. For a person can only love something which, in some way, he knows, and which, in some way, 'fits' his appetite. A third cause of love, as St. Thomas sees it, is likeness" (Redpath 81). Both Aquinas and Augustine agree that what the soul loves is also good; that man cannot love that which is evil in something. It is the good, whether misperceived or not, that man reaches out to and loves. And thus the

consideration of the humanity of Christ, this ultimate goodness in a human body, evokes from Fisher some of his finest writing:

And of truth much goodlie must he needes be that hath made so many goodly creatures. Behold the Rose, the Lillie, the Vyolet, beholde the Pecoockes, the Feasaunt, the Poppingaye: Behold all the other creatures of this world: All these were of his making, all there beautie and goodlinesse of hym they receyved it. Wherefore this goodlinesse describeth that he him self must needes of necessitie be verie goodly & beautifull. And for that in the booke of Canticles the Spouse describeth his goodlinesse saying: Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus, electus ex millibus. That is to saye, hee that I love is whyte and redde, chosen out of amongst thousands. And this beautie and goodlines is not mortal, it can not fade ne perish as doeth the goodlinesse of other men, which lyke a flower to day is fresh and lustie, and to morrow with a little sicknesse is withered and vanished away (E.W. 376).

The seventh consideration as to why the soul should love God is that God has loved man. Since God has shown such great love to man, it is only natural that man should love God in return:

And if this beliefe truly settle in your harte, it is to me a mervaille if you can content your heart without the love of him, of him I say, that thus deerely hath loved you, and doeth love you still. For what other lover will doe thus much for your love? What creature in all the world will die for your sake? What one person will depart with one drop of his hart bloud for your sake? When then the son of God, the prynce of heaven, the Lord of Angels hath done this for your sake, which thing no other creature wil do, what frost could have ungeled your harte, that it may not relent against so great an heat of love? (E.W. 379-80)

This concentration upon the great love that Christ showed for mankind by dying a bloody death upon the cross was typical of recusant Catholicism. The Passion of Christ was one of the thematic features of recusant devotional prose, as we shall see in the writings that appear ahead.

The eighth consideration is the infinite love of Christ. The only limitation to receiving the love of Christ, Fisher tells his sister, is the limitation of one's own sinful nature. Fisher compares the love of Christ to an image reflected in many mirrors. The mirrors are the individual souls of men; the image has the same brightness and intensity for all, but only those mirrors which are cleansed and polished are able to receive the full image.

"Such soules as by true pennaunce doing, by sighing, by weeping, by praying, by watching, by fasting, & by other lyke, be the better scoured and clensed from the spottes and mallice of deadly sinne, they bee the brighter glasses and more cleerly receyve this love, & such also be neere unto our Savior, for nothing putteth us far from him but onely sinne" (E.W. 381). The main point of Fisher's analogy is that the love of Christ is so great that every soul is able to receive it as if it were meant for that soul alone. Fisher writes that "...every one of the soules recyve as full and as whole a love of Jesu Christ, as though there were not moe soules in all the world but that one alone, for the love of Christ Jesus is infinite" (E.W. 382). This is one of the most compelling considerations for inspiring the love of God in the soul, and Fisher has reached a crescendo in his presentation. Fisher tells his sister that if she were the only soul in the world, Christ's love for her would be the same. Christ would have died for her alone. No individual soul receives less love due to the "multitude of his fellows", but it will receive as much or as little as its "cleansing", "capacitie", and "nighnesse unto Christ" allows.

Fisher's ninth consideration is a warning against complacency. After telling her about Christ's infinite love for her, Fisher fears that she may take his love for granted; she may fall into the false belief that the

infinite love of Christ will permit her anything. He can almost hear her asking him: "Brother, if it bee thus as you say, that my Lord Jesu loveth me so much, and is so mindfull of me, as so fervently entendeth my weale, what neede me to care whatsoever I doe, he will not cast me away, he will not forsake me nor suffer mee to perish" (E.W. 382). True it is, Fisher tells her, that Christ will never forsake her or cast her away. However, Fisher cautions her, it is possible for her to cast herself away: "But if you give any place to sinne in your soule, and suffer it to enter upon you, verely then you forsake your self and cast yourselfe awaye, and willinglie destroye your selfe, that is your deede & not hys: for he never forsaketh any creature unlesse they before have forsaken them selves" (E.W. 383). If she has any lingering doubts about this, he reminds her of the story of Adam and Eve, how they were cast out of Paradise for their sin, despite the infinite love God had for them. He also reminds her of Lucifer and the other angels who rebelled against God; despite God's love for them, they were cast out of Heaven, and their "merveylous brightnesse became incontinently horrible" and they were "throwen into perpetual darknesse into the pryson of Hell" (E.W. 383). To show her how serious the matter of sin is, how ugly God finds it, and what a distance it places between the soul and God, Fisher tells her that even if Mary, the mother of God, or Mary Magdalene had been guilty of one mortal sin when

they died they would have been cast into hell. He repeats the old legend that Mary Magdalene, after the death of Christ, "had fled the companie of men, & lyved in the wilderness farre from any worldly comforte, in great wayling, fasting, and prayer, & such other painefulnesse of hir body..." (E.W. 384). This should be a cautionary tale for his sister, Fisher thinks, and he tells her that it is the very love of the soul for Christ that should keep her free from sin, rather than lead her into complacency.

The tenth consideration Fisher urges upon his sister is to compare her small and imperfect love for Christ with the infinite love that Christ has for her. If she considers of what "little value" her love is compared to how "excelent" the love of Christ for her is, then she will know that any sacrifice, even martyrdom, is a small gift to give in return. He mentions the martyrs of the Church and points out that "no paine, no tormentrie, might compell them to forsake his love; so desirous were they of his love..." (E.W. 385). He places this love in the context of the Song of Songs and refers to her "spouse" the "sweet Jesu". He pictures Jesus as the bridegroom, seeking the hearts of men, and the human heart is such a small gift to recompense Christ for his great sacrifice. He tells his sister that if "my poore harte were of so much value as all the hartes of men and weomen that ever were, if they were put together in one, & if it were as precious and noble as there is price

and noblenesse in all the orders of the Angels, if furthermore, it did contayne in it all bodelie and spirituall treasure that is within the compasse of heaven or without, yet it were by a little gift to give unto so great a lord" (E.W. 385-386). And yet, despite the smallest and unworthiness of this human heart as a gift, it is Christ's pleasure to have it.

His final consideration to his sister is a reminder that she should often and remember these writings he has sent her. If she does, "they will somewhat inflame your harte with the love of Christ Jesu" and all future devotion and prayer "shall bee easie unto you, and no whit painefull" (E.W. 386). In the last resort, he tells her, there is no "helpe and succour" except in calling upon "the most sweete Jesu". There is no doubt that Fisher, writing these words in the Tower, was writing from personal experience.

On June 22, 1535, Fisher was awoken before 5:00 in the morning by Sir Edmund Walsingham, the lieutenant of the Tower, and informed that he was to be executed that day. Fisher asked him at what time he was to be executed and upon being told it was to be at 10:00 a.m., he asked permission to sleep a little longer since he had not slept well the night before. As his early biographer recounts the details:

"Well," then said he, "let me by your patience sleep an hour or two; for I have slept verry little ths night; and yet, to tell you the truth,

not for any fear of death, I thank God, but by reason of my infirmity and weakness" (Hughes 181). Fisher went back to sleep and slept soundly for two more hours. When Fisher had been condemned to death, he had been assigned a traitor's death, complete with hanging, disembowelling, and quartering. This sentence was commuted to simple beheading by Henry VIII:

But where is judgment at Westminster he was condemned...to drawing, hanging and quartering, as traitors always be, yet was he spared from that cruel execution, not for any pity or clemency meant on the King's part toward him, but the only cause thereof (as I have credibly heard) was for that, if he should have been laid upon and drawn to Tyburn, being the ordinary place for that purpose and distant above two miles from the Tower, it was not unlikely but he would have been dead long ere he had come there: seeing he was a man of great age and, besides that, very sickly and weak of body through his long imprisonment. Wherefore order was taken that he should be led no further than to the Tower Hill, and there have his head struck off (Hughes 180).

As it was, Fisher had to be carried down the steps of the Tower in a chair because he was so weak. At the foot of the Tower, he was turned over to the sheriffs of London for

execution. He opened his New Testament, the only book he had with him, at random and read the first passage he came to. It was John 17:3-5: "Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. I have glorified thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that thou hast given me to do. And now do thou, Father, glorify me with thyself, with the glory that I had with thee before the world existed." Fortified by these words, Fisher approached the scaffold. In the spirit of the early martyrologies, we are told that he bounded up the steps of the scaffold:

And when he was come to the foot of the scaffold, they that carried him offered to help him up the stairs. But then said he: "Nay, masters, seeing I am come so far, let me alone, and ye shall see me shift for myself well enough." And so went up the stairs without any help, so lively that it was marvel to them that knew before of his debility and weakness. But as he was mounting up the stairs the south east sun shined very bright in his face (Hughes 184).

When his gown was taken from him, his weakness and bodily deformity was revealed to all. The spectators were surprised that such a man, so near to death by natural causes, was being executed at all. "There was to be seen a long, lean, and slender body, having on it little other

substance, besides the skin and bones" (Hughes 184). We are told that the cruelty of Henry VIII exceeded even that of the Turks, because not even the Turks would have executed such an old man so close to death already, unless it was "for pity's sake to rid it from any longer pain" (Hughes 185). When he was on the scaffold, Fisher uttered his last words to the assembled throng:

Christian people, I am come hither to die for the faith of Christ's holy Catholic Church and I thank God hitherto, my stomach hath served me very well thereunto, so that yet I have not feared death. Wherefore I do desire you all to help and assist me with your prayers, that at the very point and instant of death's stroke, I may in that very moment stay steadfast without fainting in any one point of the Catholic Faith, free from any fear. And I beseech Almighty God of His infinite goodness to save the King and this realm, and that it may please Him to hold His holy hand over it and send the King good counsel (Hughes 185).

With that, Fisher laid down before the block, was blindfolded, and his head was struck off.

His early biographer repeats a rather curious story about the head of John Fisher. It was to be exposed on London Bridge as was usual for the heads of those held to be traitors, but prior to that Anne Boleyn asked to see it. It

was brought to her and she, being "the chief cause of this holy man's death" (due to the fact of Fisher's vehement opposition to the King's divorce and subsequent marriage to her) looked at it "contemptuously" and uttered the following words: "Is this the head that so often exclaimed against me? I trust it shall never do me more harm." With that, she struck the head with the back of her hand. Fisher had a protruding tooth and her finger hit the tooth. The finger was sore for many days afterwards and even after it had healed "the mark of the hurt place remained to be seen till her dying day" (Hughes 187). The story is obviously apocryphal, yet served to reinforce Fisher's image as a new John the Baptist.

The body was stripped and left naked upon the scaffold for the entire day, until someone "for pity and humanity cast a little straw on it" (Hughes 187). Finally, at eight o'clock in the evening, the body was taken to a shallow grave in a nearby church yard and dumped in "all naked and flat upon his belly, without either sheet or other accustomed thing belonging to Christian man's burial (Hughes 187). The King had ordered the body to be buried "contemptuously" (Hughes 187). The head was exposed upon London Bridge and appeared to those observing it to look fresher in death than it had in life. The head looked fresher each day, despite the hot weather (Hughes 187). So many people stopped to look at this miracle, that after

fourteen days the head was dumped into the river (Hughes 188).

Fisher was unique in many ways. He was one of the last medieval churchmen to live on into the beginnings of the modern age. He was one of the last Catholic Bishops in England, at least until modern times. As J. J. Scarisbrick points out, there were other things that made Fisher truly unique:

Fisher is the first English bishop ever to have been put on trial for treason, found guilty, and executed. He is the only English Catholic Bishop to have suffered that fate. He was the first chancellor of Cambridge to be so treated, but not the last. He is the only cardinal ever to have been martyred (155).

Notes

1 The New Learning refers not only to the rediscovery of Greek and its placement in the curriculum, but also the new interest in rhetorical eloquence. The New Bible studies included the three traditional languages associated with the Bible. The Vulgate was written in Latin, and Fisher would have considered this a Biblical language along with Greek and Hebrew. Fisher was also a practitioner of humanism, which was an essential part of the New Learning. Not only did he bring Erasmus to Cambridge, but he read and appreciated Petrarch, Nicholas of Cusa, Mantuan, and Pico (Surtz 159). In all of this, he was very much abreast of his times. His influence as an educator has been recently represented in a volume edited by Bradshaw and Duffy (Cambridge 1989). Fisher's efforts at Cambridge included a desire to train effective preachers, believing eloquence to be worthy value (Reynolds 15).

2 The circumstances of John Fisher's death have impeded the study of his life...(His) executive as a leading opponent of the Henrician ecclesiastical revolution has disposed historians of a Whiggish disposition to classify him without much more ado as a conservative medieval churchman. Accordingly they pass over his career as possessing little significance for the march of progress (Bradshaw 1).

3 "As the years passed age was to become a part of Fisher. With most men age is an accident of time that slowly colors the qualities most distinctive of their manhood. But with Fisher age was to become essential to his style, essential to the shape and form in which he makes his appeal to history" (Macklen 22).

4 "Fisher was a great scholar and patron of learning. His name is linked with the revival of letters in England, and with the Humanist movement. As vice-chancellor of Cambridge in 1501, reader in divinity in 1503, chancellor in 1504, and president of Queen's College (1505-1508), he infused new life into the university, which had been on the wane and lacked resources" (Constant 201).

5 "Even though the developments which he engineered were not notably innovative in specific detail, they were firmly progressive in their thrust towards the ideal of a collegiate University, evangelically oriented in a theology and in its training, and committed to promoting the three biblical languages" (Bradshaw 6-7).

6 The edition I have used is that edited by Philip Hughes in 1935 simply entitled: Saint John Fisher: The Earliest English Life. The author of this work, written in 1559 or 1560, is not known for certain. It was originally ascribed to Dr. Thomas Baily, but is now thought by some to be the work of Richard Hall. "It appears most probably that Hall, relying on written accounts by students of St. John's

College and Christ College, Cambridge, as well as making use of documentation from the pens of such ecclesiastics as Thomas Watson, was the major compiler of this initial Life of Fisher. He was most certainly the translator of the work into Latin." (Cunningham 6). The author, whoever he may have been, is hereafter referred to as the "early biographer", or simply designated by "Hughes" referring to the Hughes' edition (See bibliography).

7 Altogether, we possess some sixteen sermons by Fisher.

8 "These commissioners, being come to Rochester, according to their commission, entered his house and first turned out all the servants. Then they fell to rifling all his goods, whereof some part was taken to the King's use, but more was embezzled to the uses of themselves and their servants. Then they came into his library of books, which they spoiled in most pitiful wise. scattering them in such sort as it was lamentable to behold. For it was replenished with such and so many kind of books, as the like was scant to be found again in the possession of any one private man in Christendom: and of them they trussed up thirty-two great piles, besides a number that were stolen away" (Hughes 167).

9 As a teacher and spiritual director of saintly women, Fisher stands in tradition reaching back to Origen and St. Jerome. "By ministering to the spiritual life of holy women in great cities, many cultivated clergymen were

enabled to step to one side of the world of their own bishops, Origen and Jerome, on the Aventine in Rome, gained to small part of their public reputation by giving spiritual guidance to devoted women, most of whom would have been virgins or widows, living in their family houses." Peter Brown, The Body and Society, p. 266.

10 Fisher's Tower works are found in The English Works of John Fisher, edited by John E.B. Meyer and published in 1876 by the Early English Text Society. Hereafter this edition will be referred to as E.W., "English Works."

11. She became a figure embodying the devotional practice of penthos, i.e., crying for sin which washed the soul and purified the heart. It was an ancient practice which went back to the early desert Fathers. Tears themselves were seen to have a salvic power. It was a tradition which continued into the Middle Ages, especially the later Middle Ages.

Chapter Three

St. Thomas More and The Dialogue of Comfort

Thomas More is a fascinating figure, largely because he combined such disparate qualities in the evolution of his personality. He possessed the simple piety of the medieval ascetic coupled with the sophisticated knowledge of the Renaissance humanist. To many readers today his intelligence is refreshing and appealing, yet some may be put off by his stern devotion. The one thing that becomes clear after even a moderate exposure to his work and personality is that he will not fit the simple categories that we often use to describe him. Some readers are disappointed because they see in his Utopia a certain promise of progressive attitudes, especially in the tolerance that More seemingly approaches in his treatment of the religion of the Utopians. In Utopia, no one is persecuted for his religion and there is no established state religion. This tolerance seems to hold promise as a precursor of more "modern" attitudes. In vague outline, at least, are perceived the faint glimmerings of political and religious tolerance. Yet these glimmerings are shadowed by the later writings against the heretics, parts of which are vitriolic in intensity. But Utopia is not as liberal as it is sometimes perceived to be. There is, in Utopia, a state belief, though minimal in doctrine, and those who preach against it are either exiled or

enslaved-- hardly a liberal approach to religious differences. Yet in some regards, More was more tolerant than his adversaries. He would require no oath from a man as to what he believed, as Henry VIII did. He would require only that a man keep to himself his opinions. if they differed from the orthodoxy established in Europe over a thousand years. More did not burn people for what they believed, only for what they taught. That is not a distinction which is likely to mean much to us today, and perhaps rightly so, but it meant much to More. One could dispute privately with a priest about his religious difficulties, but not in public, and especially not in front of the common people, those who would be most unsettled by religious controversy. The notion that one does not dispute before the common people is indicative of an aristocratic and hierarchic view of society. Yet it is not surprising that More reflects the ideas of his time, that he believes in hierarchy and social ranking. Even More's Utopia was written in Latin, the scholarly language. It was never meant to be read or discussed by the common people.

There is quite a contrast between More the Renaissance humanist and tolerant Utopian and More the burner of heretics and writer of impassioned defenses of orthodoxy. It is possible, perhaps, to interpret the later More in terms of the earlier More, to say that More felt guilty over his early interest in a tolerant brand of humanism and tried to

atone for it with his later persecution of heretics, which he might have helped to create. Or it is possible to see More's development from a liberal youth to a conservative maturity as normal in human development.¹

Jasper Ridley sees More as the Renaissance equivalent of the modern despot, the political extremist who may be sincere but is totally dangerous:

One can also imagine Thomas More in the twentieth century, and it is sad that this is a far more frightening picture. It is a picture of a sincere but well meaning idealist and a brilliant intellectual, whose principles and flawless logic, combined with a repressed but deeply ingrained emotionalism, have turned him into a fanatic determined to crush what he considers to be the forces of evil. One can imagine him, after writing books about socialism and planning, becoming more and more obsessed with the menace of the enemy who was assaulting civilization, and reaching the point where he justifies by specious arguments, the liquidation of millions of human beings as a regrettable but necessary measure in the fight against Jewish Bolshevism or Trotskyist deviationism, or the extermination of three quarters of the world's population (293).

Rarely has an historical figure been so extensively slandered. One does not really know what to make of Ridley's comments about More, except perhaps to point out that More was not trying to foment the Renaissance equivalent of moderns nuclear war, but to prevent it. The closest thing to modern nuclear war in the Renaissance world would have been the Thirty Years War in Germany, when war, plague, famine, and religious persecution devastated the entire country. It was to prevent this from occurring in England that motivated More's persecution of heretics. More was disturbed not only by religious error, but also by the prospect of violent political upheaval, which was sometimes occasioned by religious error. Religious error would be taken care of in the next world, although its spread could imperil souls, but political upheaval would work its way out in this world. The real charge against More does not seem to involve his intolerance as such, but rather what he was intolerant of. Henry VIII and Elizabeth I burned far more people than More did, but that fact is not remarked on when discussing More's burning of heretics. Ridley does not seem to see Henry VIII and Elizabeth I in such draconian light. They are not accused of being the Renaissance equivalent of modern fomenters of nuclear war. The opponents of More adopted the same tactics in suppressing heresy.

More believed that every individual soul had an eternal destiny, either to reside in eternal happiness with God in

Heaven or to persist in eternal torment in Hell. The eternal welfare of the human soul was far more important than the body's temporal welfare, although perhaps the majority of men in that time behaved as if they believed the opposite to be true. More persecuted heretics not only possibly to save their souls, but also to save the souls of those who watched them die. The eternal consequences of heresy were not always easy to see, but the temporal consequences were.

Not only did More believe in the eternal life of the soul, but he believed that the eternal destiny of the soul was in doubt up until the very moment that one died. In fact, one's eternal fate could be decided by the very way one died. One could spend an entire life working for the prize of Heaven and yet lose the prize at the very last moment with a despairing breath. So the act of dying itself was of eternal importance in the thought of More. One focused on death while one was still in the prime of life because it was the very act of dying itself which could influence where one spent eternity.²

To understand More, it is important to see what a vital role the act of dying played in his thought, as well as the idea of life after death. If one does not believe that pain will be redeemed and recompensed in Heaven, then pain and death will become the greatest of evils, not the lack of faith, which More saw as the greatest evil. It was the conviction that pain was redemptive and that this life was

not the end that led to More's determination to die rather than take the Oath of Succession. To More, death was not the greatest evil, but the rite of passage to something far better, or possibly far worse.

The modern reader's response to More can also be affected by More's rather stern views on sexuality. It was not that More detested sexuality: it had its purpose in the procreation of the human race, a purpose which had long been enshrined in Catholic theology. No doubt, too, More would have subscribed to the Pauline maxim that it was better to marry than to burn. Erasmus thought that this was one of the reasons More himself decided to marry, that he would rather be a good husband than a bad monk (Marius 34). More classed sexuality with sensuality, the general enjoyment of bodily pleasure. As such, it was distinctly inferior to spiritual pleasure.

Some of his attitude may be explained by that strong streak of asceticism which More inherited from the Middle Ages, at least that medieval culture which was most strongly influenced by monasticism, which stressed withdrawal from the world. The beginnings of this attitude go back to the Church Fathers, especially Jerome and Augustine.³ The doctrine owes much to Plato and the New Testament. Plato's doctrine that the soul was superior to the body, that the soul was, in fact, an unwelcome guest in the body, led to the doctrine that spiritual, or intellectual, pleasures were

not only superior to physical pleasures. but that physical pleasures interfered with spiritual pleasures because the exercise of the physical mechanism produced a false pleasure which mimicked the true pleasure of the soul:

For it is to be known that like as we be made of two far divers and unlike substances, the body and the soul, so we be apt and able to receive two divers and unlike pleasures. the one carnal and fleshly, the other ghostly and spiritual. And like as the soul excelleth the body. so doth the sweetness and spiritual pleasure of all fleshly delight, which is of truth no very true pleasure, but a false counterfeit image of pleasure (More, The Four Last Things 5-6).

There is also the influence of the New Testament, in which Jesus taught a form of physical asceticism. Jesus encouraged those who forsook sexuality for the Kingdom of Heaven, although he cautioned that only those "accept it who can" (Mat 19:12). He also indicated that there is no giving or receiving in marriage in Heaven.

The cult of virginity was extremely popular in the Middle Ages. Marius comments upon this cult in his biography of More:

Today it is hard even for devout Catholics to understand how completely the cult of virginity captivated the church of the Middle Ages. From

the beginning, Christians prized virginity above matrimony (35).

It is on this very issue that More and the Reformers often locked horns. One of the foremost tenets of the Reformers was the sanctity and desirability of matrimony. The good Christian no longer refrained from matrimony; in fact, he became a complete Christian by getting married. As C.S. Lewis pointed out in his English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, one of the issues dividing Puritans from the old religion was the importance of virginity (34-35). In the sixteenth century, the Catholics were the rigorist party and not the Puritans. One of the charges that More constantly lodged against his reforming opponents was that they had forsaken their monkly vows and were engaging in lechery:

And as for whores and baudes, all the worlde knoweth I suppose that the hed maysters the arche-heretykes all theyr sectes, are chyefe whore maysters beyng prestes, monkes, and freres, that have professed chastyte and yet make harlottes of professed nunnes under the name of wyves, and avow theyr lechery boldely, and have whole townes open to baudes unto theyr bestely lechery (More, Confutation of Thndale's Answer C.W., Vol. 8, Part II, 836).4

He attacks the Reformers not so much because they were engaging in "bestely lechery," since priests and monks had been doing so from the beginning.

Their real offense was making it licit for priests to marry; they set marriage up as the ideal rather than a grudging concession to the demands of the flesh and the necessity of procreation:

Saynt Johan also breached penaunce for synne but these felowes kepe styll thery owne synnys them selfe, and call them vertue, and avow the breke of theyr vow for well done, and theyr lechery for matrymony, & callevyll good and good evyll, whyte blakke and blakke whyte & teache men to contemne penaunce, and make men abjorre confessyon, and thynke that lytle sorrow suffyseth, and satysfacyon is nede none at all, but great synne to go aboute yt (Confutation 653).

In fact, More saw the Reformers as libertines. It was not only that they gave in to lechery, but they also gave over the penances so common to medieval spirituality. If we are to understand the situation, Lewis tells us, we must reverse our very notion of what a Puritan is, at least the way a Puritan in the sixteenth century is perceived:

The idea that a Puritan was a repressed and repressive person would have astonished Sir Thomas More and Luther about equally. On the contrary,

More thought of a Puritan as one who 'loved no
lenton fast. nor lightlve no faste elles. saving
brekefast. and eate fast. and drinke fast. and
slepe fast. and luste fast in their lechery...

(Selected Literarv Essavs 116).

More always displayed a certain repugnance for sexual contact, which was a traditional attitude for those striving for perfection. This repugnance, however, must be balanced against the more positive aspects of asceticism, which involve the primacy of the spiritual to the physical, a primacy embraced by some members of all the world's great religions. More speaks continually of the pleasures of the spiritual life. Perhaps the very notion of spiritual pleasure is not as strong as it once was, or the physical is no longer seen as interfering with the spiritual, and this has provoked some antipathy to More's sexual attitudes. If, however, there is such a thing as spiritual pleasure which the pursuit of physical pleasure interferes with, then More can be seen as an exponent of the traditional view that sex interferes with the spiritual development of the soul, at least for those seeking perfection.

Physical ascetisim has played some role in all religious traditions, not just the Catholic. The ideal of the religious solitary, the celibate monk, is common to most of the religions of mankind. All healthy asceticism, if one indeed believes there is such a thing, is undertaken in the

pursuit of an ideal. The basis for asceticism is the mystical quest, whose goal is the union with God. In this context, the Puritan Reformation can be seen a truly revolutionary in that it transferred the mystical quest from the monk's cell to the marriage bed.

Another great focus of More spirituality was the meditation upon the Passion of Christ. More used the crucifix as a religious emblem to inspire this devotion, and this was another area in which he found himself at odds with the Reformers. More could not fathom why the Reformers were so anxious to destroy such religious images. He compared their ferocity in this regard to that of the Turks. They were destroying wilfully and determinedly what had been honored and used in public and private devotions for fifteen hundred years. The Reformers' war against images culminated in the reign of Elizabeth, when the shrines were stripped bare and the churches reduced to plainness. More would have seen this as desecration bordering on blasphemy.

More retained his devotion to the Passion of Christ throughout his life and last years were especially given to a continuing meditation on it. Two of his last works, one written entirely in the Tower and the other probably given the finishing touches in the Tower, were meditations upon the Passion. His meditation A Treatise upon the Passion was begun before his imprisonment and completed during it. His other devotional treatise, De Trisitia Christi, was written

wholly in the Tower. Both works are exemplifications of the Passion theme. There is little doubt that More turned intensively to the Passion in his last years because of his own personal situation. He was in danger from the time he resigned the chancellorship in 1532. He knew that a traitor's death was a distinct possibility for him, and he would naturally turn to the sufferings of Christ for strength. Yet he was also following the traditional piety in which he had been raised.

Richard Kieckhefer places the devotion to the Passion of Christ in a fourteenth century context in which it was a part of the general devotion to the humanity of Christ:

Through the high and late Middle Ages there was increasing attention and devotion to the humanity of Jesus, particularly to those moments in his life that aroused sentiments of love and compassion; his infancy, and his passion. With major stimulus from the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, and with strong support from Francis of Assisi, the humanity of Jesus became central in medieval spirituality. (90).

Huizinga also identifies Bernard as one of the originators of the devotion to the Passion and points out its centrality in medieval spirituality:

Ever since the gentle mysticism of Saint Bernard, in the twelfth century, had started the strain of

pathetic tenderness about the Passion of Christ, the religious sensibility of the medieval soul had been increasing. The mind was saturated with the concepts of Christ and the cross (190).

Huizinga also points out, interestingly enough, that two of the greatest themes of medieval life and literature, the Passion of Christ and the chivalry of knighthood, were combined by Philippe de Mezieres in the fourteenth century, who wished to "remedy all the evils of the century by a new order to chivalry, that of the Passion, which is to combine Christendom in a common effort to expel the Turks" (86). This linkage of the Passion with knighthood became fixed in the late Middle Ages and we see the Jesuits later training missionaries to return to England, often to endure their own passion and martyrdom, and believing it to be a form of spiritual knighthood. Ignatius Loyola, for example, was saturated with the Spanish traditions of knighthood and military valor. Ignatius was also deeply devoted to the meditation on the Passion of Christ, and the whole third week of his spiritual exercises is given to an extended meditation on the Passion.

Bernard of Clairveaux, who preached a new crusade against the infidels, saw a linkage between chivalry and Christianity. His devotion to the Passion was not as austere and militaristic as Ignatius', but rather warm and full of almost tender love. It was more in this tradition that

Thomas More practiced his own devotion to the Passion. Bernard felt that Christ did not need to suffer as he did in order to redeem fallen mankind. One drop of his blood would have sufficed. Yet Christ chose to suffer more than was necessary so that his human nature would learn compassion, would truly know the sufferings of man, and would serve as a complete example for man to imitate in his own sufferings:

For just as pure truth is seen only by the pure of heart, so also a brother's miseries are truly experienced only by one who has misery in his own heart. You will never have real mercy for the failings of another until you know and realize that you have the same failings in your soul. Our Savior has given us the example. He willed to suffer to that he might know compassion; to learn mercy he shared in our misery (The Steps of Humility 35).

What Christ knew from all eternity, he experienced in time. Christ did this out of love for man, and this love is what is stressed in the writings of Bernard:

Lower still he came to take our form in which he could do what he could not do before, suffer and be subject to authority and learn by experience the mercy of a fellow-sufferer and the obedience of a fellow-traveler. As I said already, he did not increase his personal knowledge by he deepened our trust in him when we see him from whom we

strayed draw near to us to know our misery by shared experience. Hardly could we have dared to approach him in his eternal tranquility but now the Apostle can urge us to go with confidence to the throne of grace because, as he tells us in another place, he has borne our weakness and our sorrows and will have compassion on us since he has borne the like (The Steps of Humility 37-38).

Thus Bernard teaches that the sufferings of Christ make him approachable in a way that his non-experiential knowledge of human suffering could not.

William of St. Thierry, a disciple of Bernard, also was devoted to the Passion of Christ, and the great love that this showed to man. He speaks of the joy that is derived from a consideration of the Passion, but first he talks of man's own hardness of heart:

The force of habit has inured us to the sight of you upon the cross, to the thought of you as dead and buried and--what should pierce our hearts even more readily and deeply--to the thought of you who on the cross thirsted for nothing by our salvation, as buffeted and scourged, as mocked and spit upon, pierced by the nails and spear, crowned with the thorns, and given gall or vinegar to drink. The earth trembled and its lights were darkened;

we want to shine before the world. The rocks were rent: but we hardened our hearts (120).

If the Passion can be conceived in its original intensity and pain, then the soul is greatly benefitted and is even able to experience joy in the love that made it possible:

For through this picturing of your passion, O Christ, our pondering on the good that you have wrought for us leads forthwith to love the highest good. That good you make us see in the work of salvation, not by an understanding arising from human effort nor by the eyes of our mind that tremble and shrink from your light, but by the peaceful experience of love, and by the good sweet use of our sight and enjoyment of your sweetness, while your wisdom sweetly orders of our affairs. (154).

It is through the "sweet meditation" upon what William calls the "wonderful sacrament" of the Passion that the soul is flooded by a "river of joy" (154).

The most popular of all late medieval devotional treatises, The Imitation of Christ, also recommends constant meditation upon the Passion. It teaches that there is no other road to salvation except by imitating Christ and carrying the cross: "without the cross there is no salvation for our souls nor hope of life eternal" (92) According to the author there is no escaping the cross. "No matter how

you plan things and arrange them to your liking, you still will find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so you will always find the cross" (92) He reminds the reader that if he refuses to accept the cross that God has fashioned for him, he will no doubt find another of his own making that is even worse. For, as he says, "there is no other way to life and interior peace except by way of the cross and by daily mortification. (92)

Thomas More would have found a rich and substantial body of English piety centered around the crucifixion of Christ which he would no doubt have been familiar with.⁵ As early as the twelfth century, Anselm of Canterbury wrote prayers which contained meditations on the Passion. These were probably written on the continent, prior to his becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, yet he likely brought copies with him as there were translations made of the poems into Middle English (Ward 19). In his prayer to Christ, Anselm calls to mind the Passion:

I am mindful of your passion,
your buffeting, your scourging, your cross, your
wounds,
how you were slain for me,
how prepared for burial and buried (Ward 95).

He also has a prayer to the Holy Cross, which joins a native English tradition of such poems as represented by "A Dream of the Rood" in which the cross of Christ is addressed and

commemoration is made of the Passion and death of Christ and what this meant for fallen humanity:

Holy Cross

which calls to mind the cross
whereon our Lord Jesus Christ died.
to bring us back from that eternal death
to which our misery was leading us.
to the eternal life we had lost by sinning. (Ward
102)

Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century prayed that she might suffer as Christ did, to imitate in her own life his Passion. She prayed for an illness that would take her to the point of death, and she subsequently received it. While in that illness, she was sorely tempted by demons, much as Margery Kempe was later tormented. Christ granted both women a vision which restored them ultimately to health. One of the visions seen by Julian was the Passion of Christ:

And after this I sawe with bodely syght the face
of the crucifixe that hange before me, in whilke I
behelde contynuely a party of his passyonn: des-
pite, spittyng in sowlyng of his bodye and
buffetyng in his blysfulle face. and manye lan-
goures and paynes. ma than I can telle. and ofte
chaungynge of coloure. and alle his blyssede face
a tyme closede in dry blode (225).

While talking to the Vicar of St. Stephens, Margery Kempe recounted the sins of her early life, and told him how she had been comforted by meditating upon the Passion:

Sythen sche schewyd hym al hyr maner of levying fro hyr chylthod as ny as it wolde come to hir mende--how unkynd sche had ben ageyn owyr Lord Ihesu Crist, how prowde & veyne sche had ben in hir aport, how envyows ageyn hir euyne-Christen, sythen, whan it plesed owyr Lord Crist Ihesu, how sche was chastysed with many tribulacyons & hor-rybyl temptacyons, & aftyward how sche was fed and comfortyd wyth holy temptacyons, & aftyward how sche was fed and comfortyd wyth holy medytacyons & specyal in the mende of owyr Lordys Passyon (38-39).

In a later stage of the narrative, Margery tells about the contemplation upon the Passion being one of the mainstays of her spiritual life. This was especially indicated during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In seeing the places where Christ suffered, she was granted the gift of tears:

Than the frerys lyftyd up a cros & led the pylgrimys aboute fro (On) place to another wher owyr Lord had sufferyd hys (peynys) and hys passyons, every man & woman beryng a wax candel in her hand. & the frerys al-vey, as thei went a-boute, teked hem what owyr Kord sufferyd in every place. & the

firseyd creatur wept & sobbyd so plentyuowly as
 thow sche had seyn owyr Kird wyth her bodyly ey
 sufferyng hys Passyon at that tyme. Befor hir in
 hyr sowle sche saw hymveryly be contemplacyon, &
 that cawsyd hir tohave compassyon. & whan thei cam
 vp on-to the Mount of Calvarye, sche fel down that
 sche mygth no stondyn ne knelyn but walsyd &
 wrested wyth hir body, spredyng hir armys a-brode,
 & cryed wyth a lowde voys as thow hir hert xulde a
 brostyn a-sundyr (68).

Devotion to the Passion was an important ingredient in
 the popular arts of the Middle Ages, both in poetry and
 drama. In Passus XVIII of The Vision of Piers Plowman,
 there is the following depiction of the Passion of Christ:

'Crucifige!' quod a cachepol, 'I warante hym a
 wicche!' 'Tolle, tolle!' quod another, and took
 of kene thornes, Abd bigan of grene thorn a
 garland to make, And sette it sore on his heed and
 seide in envye, 'Ave raby!' quod the ribaud--and
 threw reedes at hym, Nailed hym with thre nailes
 naked on the roode, And poison on a poole thei
 putte up to his lippes, And beden hym drynken his
 deeth--yuel--hise dayes, werey done...(221).

The Passion was also an essential part of the Mystery
 Play cycle. There were individual plays on the Council of the
 Jews (called to discuss the disposition of Christ), the Last

Supper, and the Betrayal (Ludus Conventriae); the Buffeting and the Scourging (Towneley); and the Crucifixion and Death and Burial (York). (Much detail is given in the York Crucifixion) to the actual nailing of Jesus to the cross, pointing out the cruelty and indifference of the soldiers to the pain they inflicted on the helpless Christ. This play forms an almost Ignatian meditation on the crucifixion. According to Martz, the method that Ignatius Loyola proposed for meditation did not arise in a vacuum, but represents "a summary and synthesis of efforts since the twelfth century to reach a precise and widely accepted method of meditation" (Martz 25). The method widely practiced included a "composition of place" during which the meditator imagined himself "present in the very spot where the event occurred" and imagined the events as taking place before his eyes (Martz 30). To someone deeply serious about religious matters as More was, he would have taken advantage of the various cultural presentations of the Passion and Death of Christ to assist him in his own meditations.

Meditation upon the Passion of Christ was, as we have seen, an essential part of traditional Catholic piety. Perhaps its popularity is best attested to by the omnipresence of the crucifix as an aid to prayer and meditation. Roper mentions that More had a separate building constructed apart from his main house at Chelsea, which Roper called the "New Building", and there, every Friday, the day tradition-

ally associated with the death of Christ, More would retire and spend the day in pious practices, including the scourging of himself. Every Good Friday, More would assemble his whole family in the New Building and would have the gospel account of the Passion read aloud to them (Marius 232). After his resignation of the Lord Chancellorship, but prior to his imprisonment, More spent his time not only in answering the Protestant Reformers, but also in deep meditation upon the Passion. It was at this time that he began the writing of the Treatise on the Passion, which he later finished in the Tower of London. While he was imprisoned, he wrote another work on the Passion, which he called De Trisitia Christi, or the Sorrow of Christ.

The meditation on the Passion served two purposes in the devotional practices of men such as More. For one thing, it reminded them that the Christian life was often encompassed by sorrow and tribulation, and that they must carry their own crosses no matter how heavy they might become, just as Christ carried his cross for them. They must be prepared to endure a martyr's death if necessary in imitation of their Savior. The second thing the meditation did was provide them with practice in resignation to the will of God, or obedience. By meditating on the fact that Christ willingly endured pain and suffering in obedience to God, they became aware of the ultimate obedience which was

expected from each Christian. Obedience to the will of God was a lesson to be derived from the example of Christ.

More was imprisoned in the Tower of London on April 17, 1534. To some extent at least, More's imprisonment must have come as a relief to him. The long waiting was at last over. More may have harbored some hopes when he accepted the Lord Chancellor's job that he might be able to accomplish some important things. Perhaps he thought he could make a difference in restraining Henry's drive for power and retarding the Protestant heresy which he saw eroding the Church. Yet it is doubtful he ever had illusions about Henry himself. His parting words to Cromwell, the man who succeeded him as Lord Chancellor, were:

"Master Cromwell...you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise and liberal Prince. If you will follow my poor advice, you shall, in your counsel giving unto His Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do, but never what he is able to do. So shall you shew yourself a true faithful servant and a right worthy Councillor. For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him" (Roper 228).

After he entered the Tower, More was finally free from the uncertainties and anxieties of his tenuous relationship with Henry. He was also free from what he no doubt felt to

be the pressing need of defending the Catholic Church from the Reformers. He had lost "the rest of... many nights' sleep" in the preparation of these polemical writings (Harnpsfield 116). In the Dialogue of Comfort, More discussed the difference between the Catholics and Protestants on good works, and he twice repeated that "Strive will I not with them upon this matter now..." (176). It was almost an official resignation from the war of words. He had never placed a great value upon polemical works anyway. The Reformers must be answered, but the reading of devotional literature he always considered to be of much greater value. More advised his readers in The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer that they would be better off reading devotional works such as the Imitation of Christ than theological controversies, even, presumably, his own (37). Once in prison, he was finally free to devote his remaining time to the welfare of his soul. This he had hoped to be able to do upon his retirement, as Harnpsfield tells us:

Now then when he had rid himself of that office, and obtained that neither chanced to Scipio Africanus, the Great Pompey, Marcus Tullius Cicero, nor to the Emperor Augustus, to be discharged when they most desired of the cumbersome affairs of the commonwealth, nor lightly doth chance to men that be entangled therein, and had now gotten that which he ever most desired, that, being discharged

of such offices and troubles, he might set and bestow the residue of his life in ghostly and spiritual studies, meditations and exercises to heavenward; this his desire, I say, when God had mercifully and graciously granted him, he was the gladdest man thereof in the world, and, as partly ye may understand by the premises, employed his time accordingly (132).

More professed to his daughter Margaret that imprisonment was not all that distasteful to him. When he had been in prison for a little more than a month, he told her:

I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here ween they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure thee, on my faith, my own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I accompt the chief part of my charge, I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter, too. But since I am come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my lack among you. I find no cause, I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case here than in my own house. For me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on His lap and dandleth me (Roper 239).

He also professed no great fear of dying, which he probably knew would be the final result of his opposition to the King. He once told the Duke of Norfolk, who had protested to him that "Indignatio principis mors est," that "Then in good faith is there no more difference between your grace and me, but that I shall die today and you tomorrow" (Roper 239). He wrote to his daughter from prison that "I have lived, methinks, a long life and now neither I look nor I long to live much longer" (Rogers 233). So he seemed to accept his fate with resignation.

Yet More was not left completely in peace, despite the fact that he had turned over the cares of office and was free of the responsibility of answering the critics of the Catholic Church. He was faced with one last fear, a nagging preoccupation which gave him little true rest. This nagging fear was what Louis Schuster describes as the "archenemy who had been haunting him during the years before his incarceration and who had never let him remain completely at ease" (39). Schuster goes on to describe the "arch-enemy" as follows:

The devil More faced within himself and that threatened his sensibility until the last morning of his imprisonment was the physical fear of disembowellment. Unlike Richard III or Utopia or his polemical works, More's prison writings are the work of a man preparing to face preliminary

torture in the Tower as well as terminal torture on Tyburn Hill (40).

Faced with the prospect of torture both before and during his execution, More found himself to be a reluctant martyr.⁶ He professed a great fear of physical pain; he told his daughter in a letter from the Tower that she could not possibly have "a fainter heart than thy frail father hath" (Rogers 241). His Tower works were written with the specter of torture before his eyes. He hoped and trusted that he would remain firm even under the most intense pain, but he could never still a persisting doubt that he might fail in the final moments. This despair, he feared, might lead to his damnation. More saw the moment of death as of vital importance. He had to remain firm in the faith, and reaffirm that faith even as he died, or he could suffer eternal damnation. More feared that his resources would fail him and he would forsake his beliefs under torture. His fear of pain was intense, a fear that is strikingly human and furnishes, perhaps, the reason for his total engagement with the reader in his final works. Ultimately he knew that the very faith he was afraid of forsaking would have to furnish him with the strength to maintain it. Yet his fear became his constant companion in the last few years of his life:

And verily, my dear daughter, in this is my great comfort, that albeit I am in nature so shrinking

from pain that I am almost afeard of fillip, yet in all the agonies that I have had, whereof before my coming hither...I had neither small nor few, with heavy fearful heart, forecasting all such perils and painful deaths, as by any manner of possibility might after fall unto me, and in such thought lain long restless and waking, while my wife had weened I had slept, yet in any such fear and heavy pensiveness...I never in my mind intended to consent that I would for the enduring of the uttermost do any such thing as I should in mine own conscience...think to be to myself, such as would damnably cast me in the displeasure of God (Rogers 242).

It was his imagination that gave to More his greatest trial of fear, this "heavy pensiveness" which he referred to above and which went about "forecasting all such perils and painful deaths" and left him in doubt as to his own powers of endurance.

Since his greatest fear was of painful torture and an equally painful death, that is, the act of disembowellment, and this fear was kept alive and intensified by his own imagination, then the only ease for this fear, the only comfort, might also be found through his imagination. For that reason, he began to compose the Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation. If his imagination intensified his

fear, then his imagination might also lessen that fear. More developed his book in the form of a dialogue between two men: Anthony, the elderly uncle and main purveyor of comfort, and Vincent, the younger nephew who goes to Anthony for wisdom in fearful times. The setting is Hungary on the eve of the invasion by the Turks, who had already, at the time of More's writing, overrun large parts of Eastern Europe and seemed to be preparing to overrun the rest in a short time. The danger posed by the Turks was real. There have been attempts by some readers to identify the Suleiman of the Turks with Henry VIII, that More was using a subterfuge to mask an attack on Henry. But as R.J. Schoeck points out, the Dialogue is no "Heywoodian Spider and Flie kind of allegory, and one subjects the Dialogue to far too mechanical and too unsubtle a reading by making figures into symbols in this manner" (23). There are, Schoeck goes on to say, "suggestive parallels" between the Suleiman and Henry VIII, but no identity (23).

The Dialogue of Comfort can be read as a record of More's inner struggle, the conflict between his cognitive faculty, represented by Anthony, and his sensitive nature, represented by Vincent (Schuster 41). Vincent goes to Anthony for comfort, even though Anthony is the one seemingly in need of comfort, since Anthony is evidently "lying in disease and sickness" (143). But Anthony has the benefit of experience; he has "long lived virtuously" and he is "lear-

ned in the laws of God" (143). Besides, Anthony has been "taken prisoner in Turkey two times" before and is thus experienced in the deprivations of the Turks and their treatment of prisoners (143). Vincent tells Anthony that one of Anthony's main comforts could well be the fact that he is "likely to depart hence ere long" and "depart to God" (143-144). Vincent tells him that "here shall you leave of your kindred a sort of sorry comfortless orphans, to all of whom your good help, comfort, and counsel hath long been a great stay." To the community which Vincent represents, Anthony has been more like a "natural father" than a more or less distant kinsman (144).

The Dialogue is divided into three books. There is a difference in content and tone between the three books. Martz, for example, in his essay on "The Design of More's Dialogue of Comfort", sees Book I as "composed of the reassertion of the familiar, traditional views" (334). Anthony in Book I presents the traditional, stoical view that suffering is good for you. In Book II, Anthony turns to the real world of actual suffering and tries to adapt the moral apothegms of Book I to "the world as it is" (336). Book III Martz sees as More's final handling of the theme of tribulation. It is on the art of meditation on the three great facts of the Christian life--heaven, hell, and the passion of Christ (343). Lee Cullen Khanna sees the three books as developing three different notions of God. God in Book I is

the great physician, using tribulation as medicine for the soul. God in Book II is the protector, the refuge one turns to in tribulation. In Book III, God is the universal jailer as More develops the theme that the world is just a larger version of the small prison (57-65). These analyses are helpful in understanding the Dialogue, especially in pointing out the differences in the three books.

One of More's most distinctive features of style, as James Clark has pointed out, is hypotaxis (9), or what Lewis in his History of Sixteenth Century Literature referred to in a less flattering vein, as an "invertebrate length of sentence" (180). More does string long series of clauses together, all centered on a prevailing image or idea. Usually the important notion is left to the end of the sentence, allowing More to use the periodic structure to achieve suspense (Clark 9). More also doubles modifiers, uses alliteration, and employs racy idioms to give spark and color to his writing. At his best, he achieves some fine prose, in the vein of what Williamson calls "Isocratic" as opposed to "Ciceronian" (19).

The long sentences in The Dialogue of Comfort are sometimes unwieldy, and Martz claims that "the turmoil of human existence is in some danger of overwhelming the unity and the direction of the dialogue" (Clark 6). Here, in an indirect way, Martz has indicated one of the strengths of More's prose style. The hypotactic structure does allow

More to represent reality in a non-chronological fashion, while still being accurate about events, as Clark states it (9). More can thus arrange his material in a psychologically effective way, rather than presenting a mere chronological narration of events. Interestingly enough, before the press of events and stimuli, the mind often works in the same way. Reality is perceived as a discrete series of events, all pressing upon the mind at the same time. Only through a process of mental selection can a distinct perception be formed. More's prose style itself reflects the nature of this experience. More's stringing together of discrete clauses reflects in a verbal medium the nature of the mental reality in perceiving the outer world. Hypotaxis lends itself naturally to this form of prose. True to human perception of reality, the controlling idea is often provided last, just as meaning is derived from reflecting on the stimuli that bombard the mind, and what at first appears a random jumble falls into place when the controlling idea is supplied.

This excerpt from The Dialogue of Comfort is exemplary:

And many fond fools are there that when they lie sick will meddle with no physic in no manner wise, nor send his water to no cunning man, but send his cap or his hose to a wise woman, otherwise called a witch. Then sendeth she word again that she hath spied in his hose where, when he took no heed, he was taked with a sprite between two doors as he went in the twilight.

But the sprite would not let him feel it in five days after, and it hath all the while festered in his body, and it is the grief that paineth him so sore, but let him go to no leechcraft, nore any manner physic, other than good meat and strong drink, for the syrups should souse him up. But he shall have five leaves of valerian that she enchanted with a charm, and gathered with her left thumb. Let him lay those five leaves to his right thumb, nor bind it fast to, but let it hang loose thereat by a green thread; he shall never need to change it, look it fall not away, but let it hang till he be whole and he shall need no more. In such wise, witches, and in such mad medicines have there many fools more faith a great deal than in God. And thus, cousin, I tell you, all these kind of folk that in their tribulation call not upon God, but seek for their ease and help elsewhere, to the flesh and the world and to the flinging fiend, the tribulations that God's goodness sendeth them for good themselves by their folly turn into their harm; and they that on the other side seek unto God therein, both comfort and profit they greatly take thereby (197-198).

In the first sentence of the above excerpt, More first observes the periodic structure. He saves the controlling idea for the last; in fact, the very last word indicates the

controlling idea--the "witch". The central idea of the passage is that people seek false comfort from a witch rather than true comfort from God, and the notion of true comfort coming from God is saved for the last part of the passage. The whole passage is a series of clauses, which come in a smooth flow, except for one of More's favorite devices--the parenthetical expression, such as when he writes: "look it not fall away." This adds a note of immediacy to the passage, as if the writer were addressing the person involved. More also uses colloquial expressions, such as "cunning man", "leechcraft" and "souse him up." He also uses certain colorful details, which add verisimilitude to his writing, such as the details that he was "between two doors" when he caught the sprite, or the "five leaves of valerian" which the witch gathered with her "left hand which he must hang by a "green thread" from his "right thumb." More also uses alliteration, which provides emphasis to certain important notions, such as "mad medicines" and the "flinging fiend" and "God's goodness." There are also doublets, such as "ease and help" and "comfort and profit." All of the above elements are distinctive of More's style.

The first book of The Dialogue of Comfort, as Martz has pointed out, is more theoretical than the last two. Anthony says tribulation "seemeth generally to signify nothing else but some kind of grief, either pain of the body or heaviness

of the mind" (149). In response to Vincent's request for some form of comfort before the Turks' ruthless advance, Anthony turns first to the pagan philosophers and shows how they are deficient in comfort. Their main lack is in their notion of God:

I never could yet find that ever those natural reasons were able to give sufficient comfort of themself; for they never stretch so far but that they leave untouched, for lack of necessary knowledge, that special point which is not only the chief comfort of all, but without which also all other comforts are nothing, that is to wit, the referring the final end of their comfort unto God, and to repute and to take for special cause of comfort, that by the patient sufferance of their tribulation they shall attain his favour, and for their pain, receiveth reward at His hand in Heaven (149-150).

Thus Anthony states at the very beginning the controlling idea of comfort, that it must be referred finally to God, that sometimes tribulation is sent by God, and other times used by God, to effect the final salvation of the soul. Suffering will be used by God to bring about virtue in the soul, or its patient endurance will be rewarded by God in Heaven. This is the central message of Anthony, and this is why the pagan philosophers are of little help in the final

days. In a controlling image in the book, he refers to tribulation as medicine, and God as the great physician:

...the principal and the effectual medicines against these diseases of tribulation shall we fetch from that high, great, and excellent physician without whom we could never be healed of our very deadly disease of damnation (150).

The main difference between Anthony and the pagan philosophers is the idea of Christ as the great physician. Not only can Christ cure the soul through suffering, but his own passion and death can serve as an example and as a consolation for his followers who suffer similar fates.

Comfort, therefore, begins in the Christian sphere of faith, and not the pagan sphere of reason. All comfort must begin "in the ground and foundation of faith, without which...all the spiritual comfort that any man may speak of can never avail a fly" (151). In speaking of faith, Anthony provides a rationale for prison literature itself, why it presents a more concentrated expression of faith. It is not only that one seeks more desperately for consolation in prison, but also prison provides freedom from the normal distractions and "worldly fantasies" of everyday life:

And finally, let us consider by Christ's saying unto them, that if we would not suffer the strength and fervour of our faith to wax lukewarm, or rather keycold, and in manner loose his vigour

by scattering our minds abroad about so many trifling things, that of matters of our faith we very seldom think but that we would withdraw our thought from the respect and regard of all worldly fantasies, and so gather our faith together into a little narrow room (152).

In that statement above, Anthony has given a fairly concise statement of the strength and value of prison literature as a genre.

Tribulation exists in the world as a punishment for sin, not simply in a negative sense, but also in a corrective sense. If all men were happy, there would be no inducement to virtue. Therefore, tribulation is a form of medicine, a spiritual medicine to make the sinner virtuous just as physical medicine makes the sick healthy. It is only through suffering that a man finds it necessary to confront the ultimate realities. If this suffering is not severe enough, he naturally turns to fantasy for comfort and relief:

Many a man that in an easy tribulation falleth to seek his ease in the pastime of worldly fantasies, findeth in a greater pain all those comforts so feeble, that he is fain to fall to the seeking of God's help; and therefore is, I say, the very tribulation itself many times a mean to bring the man to the taking of the afore-remembered comfort

therein, that is to wit, to the desire of comfort given by God, which desire of God's comfort is, as I have proved to you, great cause of comfort itself (157).

Tribulation thus medicates the soul against fantasy and is an inducement to seeing reality. Christ has demonstrated by his own passion a central fact about the nature of reality. Man must suffer in this world, and it is only by the acceptance of suffering as a medicine that a man finds comfort.

Anthony proposes three reasons for tribulation. It is sometimes a punishment for sin, not necessarily something that God sends to us, but something that follows naturally from sin. It is "like the sickness that followeth our intemperate surfeit," Anthony says, "or the prisonment or other punishment put upon a man for his heinous crime" (162). Or it may be sent directly by God as a "punishment of some sins past" or for "preserving us from some sin in which we were else like to fall" (162). Finally, it may be sent to us "for no respect of...(our)...sins at all, but for the proof of...(our)...patience and increase of...(our)...merit" (162). In the first two cases, that of punishment of present or past sin, or to prevent future sin, tribulation is medicine. In the last case, the case of increasing our merit, then tribulation is "better than medicinable" (162). It comes not to cure our sin, but to increase our virtue. "So while we be yet in this world in

which is our place and our time of merit and well deserving, the tribulation that is sent us for our sin here shall (if we faithfully so desire), beside the cleansing and purging our pain, serve us also for increase of reward" (173).

Tribulation exists in the world in order to provide us with hope for Heaven and merit in achieving it:

Now because that this world is, as I tell you, not our eternal dwelling but our little while wandering, God would that we should in such wise use it as folk that were weary of it, and that we should in this vale of labour, toil, tears, and wealth, and felicity (178).

There is something distinctly old fashioned about the notion of the world as a "little-while wandering," and as a "vale of tears". Anthony quotes Christ as admonishing those who laugh now, for in the next world they shall "wail and weep". And Christ cheers those who are now weeping by telling them that they shall laugh later. "There is time of weeping and there is time of laughing. But as you see, he setteth the weeping time before; for that is the time of this wretched world, and the laughing time shall come after in heaven" (178). To Anthony, the telling blow against worldly laughter is the example of Christ, who never laughed. "And for to prove that this life is no laughing time, but rather the time of weeping, we find that our Saviour Himself wept twice or thrice, but never find we that He laughed so much

as once" (179). Finally, Anthony tells Vincent that God chastises only those he loves. Worldly suffering is a sign of God's special love for the soul. "And if it be true that Saint Paul saith that God chastiseth all them that He loveth, and scourgeth every child whom He receiveth, and to heaven shall none come but such as He loveth and receiveth, when shall they then come thither whom He never doth vouchsafe to file His hands upon them nor give them so much as one lash?" (180). All of Anthony's answers so far have been theologically sound, but they seem to lack in warmth. They are voiced by the stoic heart, indifferent to pain and suffering, accepting it in fact as distinctly beneficial to the soul. Yet the flesh does not so easily stand up to pain and torture, and the answers that Anthony gives do not suffice. They do not even suffice for him, as ultimately he must turn to the Passion of Christ as the only true comfort available to him.

Vincent is not convinced. He lodges two objections which are difficult for Anthony, or anyone else for that matter, to answer. If it is true that God chastises those He loves, and worldly suffering is a sign of his special favor, why is it then that there are some who are in continual prosperity, especially the mighty of the world? In perhaps an indirect reference to Henry VIII, Vincent wonders about those "who have the rule and authority of this world in their hand" (180). For not only do such powerful men

have continual prosperity in this world, but they are surrounded by priests and bishops who are continuously telling them that they will enjoy the rewards of Heaven also. Are these priests not telling the truth? And if they are, why do some have to suffer so much to merit heaven, and others, enjoy continual prosperity and merit heaven, too? Is Vincent really asking the question: Why do some men receive so abundantly of good fortune while others suffer so terribly? And can we say with assurance that all those who receive prosperity are doomed to eternal punishment? Or can we say with assurance that all those who suffer adversity and tribulation are automatically received into Heaven for it? "And I wot well," Vincent tells Anthony in reference to the mighty of the world, "that when they talk with such great cunning men as I trow tell the truth, and when they ask them whether, while they make merry here in earth all their life, they may not yet for all that have heaven after too, they do tell them yes, yes, well enough." Vincent is insistent in his objection, and adds with emphasis: "For I have heard them tell them so myself" (180-1).

Anthony, in responding to Vincent, seems to lose some of the starch from his stoic front, using a very homely example. The kings and the mighty of this world are often flattered either "for lucre or fear" (181). God might send the rich man tribulation for his own salvation, but the rich man would be angry about it and would not benefit from it.

So the advisor either tells him nothing or assures him that he will go to Heaven anyway. The advisor in this case is like the mother whose son has slept late and will not get to school on time:

And in such wise deal they with him as the mother sometime doth with her child, which, when the little boy will not rise in time for her but lie still abed and slug, and when he is up weepeth because he hath lien so long, fearing to be beaten at school for his late coming thither, she telleth him then that it is but early days, and he shall come time enough, and biddeth him:

Go, good son, I warrant thee, I have sent to thy master myself; take thy bread and butter with thee, thou shalt not be beaten at all. And thus, so she may send him merry forth at the door that he weep not in her sight at home, she studieth not much upon the matter though he be taken tardy and beaten when he cometh to school. Surely thus, I fear me fare there many friars and state's chaplains, too, in comfort giving to the great men they be loath to displease them, I cannot commend their thus doing, but surely I fear me thus they do (182).

Vincent finds Anthony's answer unconvincing. He poses the question again, in a different form, and this is his

second objection. In the Church itself, in the Mass, all men "pray specially for the princes and the prelates, and generally every man for other and for himself, too, that God would vouchsafe to send them all perpetual health and prosperity" (182-183). Conversely, we never pray that God will send sorrow and suffering to anyone. If suffering is so medicinal to the soul, why then do we not pray that God will send ample suffering to everyone? And in the next question, Vincent asks why we should do anything to relieve the suffering of a man, since that suffering is so beneficial. "And neither should any man give any medicine to another, nor take any medicine himself neither, for by the minishing of the tribulation he taketh away part of the profit from his soul, which can with no bodily profit be sufficiently recompensed" (183).

Anthony backs away a bit from his extreme statement of the proposition and agrees that not all tribulation is beneficial and not all tribulation is sent by God. He did not mean to say "worldly prosperity were always displeasing to God, or tribulation ever more wholesome to every man" (184). Anthony then has to redefine tribulation to include mental suffering as well as physical. Tribulation includes "the prick of thorn, a bramble, or a briar thrust into his flesh or into his mind" (186). If one considers the double nature of tribulation, it is not such a simple matter. We never pray that the rich and mighty will be spared all

tribulation. If they sin, for example, we do not ask for them to be spared the pangs of a guilty conscience. We never pray that the rich and mighty will receive no punishment for their sins. Such prayers would attempt to contravene the divine purposes operating in the universe. Anthony draws forth biblical examples of the rich and powerful, men such as Abraham, Job, and Solomon, and shows that they suffered considerable tribulation. He sticks to his statement that a life full of uninterrupted prosperity is a sure mark of damnation (202-3). He says that, on balance, tribulation is to be preferred to prosperity because tribulation is more spiritually profitable than prosperity.

To back up his earlier statement that God chastises those he loves, Anthony points out that tribulation is not always sent to man as a punishment for his sin. Often God will send suffering for no other reason than to draw the soul to Himself. It is extremely difficult to turn to God while experiencing prosperity. A man will turn to God only during times of worldly hardship and suffering. "God sendeth us also such tribulation sometime because His pleasure is to have we pray unto Him for help" (193). In times of prosperity, we "remember not but forget to pray to Him"; therefore He "sendeth us sorrow and sickness to force us to draw toward Him, and compelleth us to call upon Him and pray for release of our pain, whereby when we learn to

know Him and to seek to Him we take a good occasion to fall after into farther grace" (193). The spiritual life begins in tribulation. For this reason alone, if for no other, tribulation is surely medicinable. Thus Anthony ends his argument for the first day.

In Book II, Anthony is again visited by Vincent. Louis Martz, in the "Introduction" to Volume 12 of the Complete Works, has noted the difference in tone between Books I and II:

As the dialogue resumes in Book II, after a lapse of several days, we find ourselves abruptly moved out of the orderly world of theory and plunged into the chaotic world of everyday. Now Antony and Vincent begin by swapping worldly jests, and Antony at once signals a drastic change in tone and technique....Book II works in quite a different way from Book I. It is thirty-five pages longer, and that extra length, we might say, is filled out with a remarkable array of racy, vivid, colloquial anecdotes. What we are watching here is a gradual process of adjusting theory to the world as it is..." (lxviii-lxix).

Anthony realizes the more theoretical discussion of a few days before by admitting that he had talked too much and he now wishes he had allowed Vincent to talk more, as is appropriate in a dialogue:

And therefore wished I the last time after you were gone, when I felt myself (to say the truth) even a little weary, that I had not so told you still a long tale alone, but that we had more often interchanged words and parted the talking between us, with often interparling upon your part in such manner as learned men use between the persons whom they devise, disputing in their feigned dialogues (214).

This bit of irony does introduce a new twist in Book II. It is as if a character in a play admits that the author of the play has not written his part very well. Anthony, a character in a "feigned dialogue", admits that he and Vincent both have to speak more to make their conversation more like a feigned dialogue. Anthony does not speak any less in Book II than he did in Book I, but he speaks differently. He begins to sound more like his creator and inculcates his message of comfort largely through jests and merry tales.

Book II is mainly about temptation. Anthony divides tribulation, which he considers a form of temptation, into three kinds. "All manner of tribulation, cousin, that any man can have, as far as for this time cometh to my mind, falleth under some one at the least of these three kinds: either is it such as himself willingly taketh, or secondly such as himself willingly suffereth, or finally such as he

cannot put from him" (220). The third kind of tribulation consists of such things as "sickness, imprisonment, loss of goods, loss of friends, or such bodily harm as a man hath already caught and can in no wise avoid," and Anthony postpones the discussion of that form of tribulation to another time. The first kind, those that are willingly taken, is put off, too. Anthony discusses now the second kind of troubles, those that are not willingly taken up but are willingly suffered when they occur. This sort of tribulation Anthony further divides into two parts. First he looks at temptation, and then he looks at persecution (232).

Anthony takes the controlling image for his discussion of temptation and persecution from Psalm 90:

The prophet saith in the ninetieth psalm:... The truth of God shall compass thee about with a pavis, thou shalt not be afraid of the night's fear, nor of the arrow flying in the day, nor of the business walking about the darkneses, nor of the incursion or invasion of the devil in the midday (237).

The truth of God is a long shield that protects the entire body (a "pavis"), and this image recurs throughout the remainder of the dialogue. Temptation is seen as a form of tribulation, and it works mainly through fear, a subject

that More was intimately acquainted with as he waited in the Tower for his eventual execution.

The first fear or the first temptation that Anthony discusses is the "fear of the night" (238). This temptation is insidious because its cause is "dark and unknown." When the devil comes in plain daylight, open and undisguised, and the temptation is strong; but when the devil comes in the night, the temptation is secret and unclear, the soul is in many ways more vulnerable. The temptation is what Anthony calls the "night fear", and he says that it has two causes:

The one, for that many times the cause of his tribulation is unto him that suffereth dark and unknown, and therein varieth it and differeth from that tribulation by which the devil tempteth a man with open fight and assault, for a known good thing from which he would withdraw him, or for some known evil thing into which he drive him by force of such persecution (239).

This description of the cause of the "night fear" comes close to what we today might call "free-floating" anxiety. More would say we are more subject to such anxiety at night than during the day.

In the night, nothing is seen in its true shape. Objects lose their distinctiveness, and outlines fade. Small things appear large, and harmless things appear dangerous. As Anthony says, "the beast that we hear roar in

the dark night of tribulation and fear it for a lion we sometime find well afterward in the day that it was no lion at all but a silly rude roaring ass" (242). This temptation is so dangerous because in the night, "fantasy doubleth...fear" and a thing may appear "much worse than indeed it is" (239). The main character defect produced by the "lion's whelps" that walk in the night is pusillanimity, by which a man has a "faint and feeble stomach" and "flieth oftentime for fear of that thing of which, if he fled not, he should take none harm" (242). A fearful flight from the things we fear only makes them grow larger. In the night, we experience "the lack of the light of faith," and spiritual things can only be seen by the "spiritual understanding" (240). The two greatest consequences of this pusillanimity are an overscrupulous conscience, which causes us great tribulation, and the urge to self-destruction, which Anthony devotes considerable space to.

There is another lion that walks in the night, and this particular beast causes the second temptation. His name is Negotium perambulans in tenebris, or "business walking in the darkness." This is not the deep darkness of the middle of the night, but the hazy darkness that occurs at dusk and at early dawn. As Anthony says:

negotium is here, cousin, the name of a devil that is ever full of business in tempting folk to much evil business. His time of tempting is in the

darknessess. For you wot well that beside the very full night which is the deep dark there are two times of darknesses, the one ere the morning wax light, the other when the evening waxeth dark (289).

The two main temptations brought by this devil are the urges to "seek the pleasures of the flesh in eating, drinking, and other filthy delight" and the desires for "worldly substance," which is covetousness (292).

The arrow that flies in the day is the arrow of pride "with which devil tempteth a man not in the night, that is to wit, in tribulation and adversity, for that time is too discomfortable and too fearful for pride, but in the day, that is to wit, in prosperity" (281). Worldly wealth and prosperity is a temptation because it can produce "the high spirit of pride" which "beareth us up in our affection aloft unto the clouds, where we ween we sit on the rainbow and overlook the world under us, accounting in the regard of our own glory such other poor souls as were peradventure wont to be our fellows for silly poor pismires and ants" (282). With this arrow, More closes out Book II. He saves the final temptation, the devil that walks at noon, for his last book.

The fourth temptation, the demonio meridiano, the noonday devil, is of all temptations the "most perilous, the most bitter sharp, and the most rigorous" (318). This

temptation is the most sharp and rigorous because it does not have "the pleasant allecives to sin" of the other temptations (319). The other temptations come in the darkness and hence mask their peril and danger; this one comes at noon, in the full light. The other temptations attack us in our weakness; this one attacks us at our strongest point. The temptations leave a man "blinded and beguiled" so that he cannot see clearly, but persecution "cometh even in the very midday, that is to wit, even upon them that have an high light of faith shining in their heart" (320). This temptation is the "most perilous," Anthony says, because it is so easy for a man to escape from this form of persecution. All he has to do is deny his faith. If he does, he will be let free and "delivered and suffered to live in rest" (321). He may even be given wealth and position for doing so. In other words, he does not have to endure humiliating death. And this is no doubt the final temptation that More himself suffered in the Tower. All he had to do was swear the oath that the state required of him and the offer of high office, of restored wealth, was his for the taking.

The Editors of the Complete Works edition interpret the noonday devil as ultimately derived from Saint Augustine. The standard gloss is found in the Enarration In Psalmum, in which Augustine "develops the idea that the incursion of the noonday devil is an assault specifically on those who are

firm in their faith and know that they are called to a future life" (C.W., Vol 12, 413). It is the most dangerous temptation because it uses the "body and the frailty of human nature to destroy the spirit" (413). Subjected to this temptation, a person would be repeatedly tortured until he gave in. As we have already seen, this was the particular temptation that More seemed to be the most troubled by.

There were ways to fight this temptation, and Anthony discusses them with Vincent. These consist of various considerations that the person undergoing the religious persecution meditates upon to achieve acceptance of his fate. The first consideration is the glorious state of Heaven which awaits the one who stays faithful during persecution. Anthony fears that the desire for Heaven and zeal in its pursuit has grown lukewarm in his time:

And surely, cousin, I doubt it little in my mind, but that if a man had in his heart so deep a desire and love, longing to be with God in heaven, to have the fruition of His glorious face, as had those holy men that were martyrs in old time, he would no more now stick at the pain that he must pass between than at that time those holy martyrs did. But, alas, our faint and feeble faith with our love to God less than lukewarm by the fiery flesh maketh us so dull in the desire of heaven,

that the sudden dread of every bodily pain
woundeth us to the heart and striketh our devotion
dead (324).

Those subject to religious persecution often lose their wealth and property. This, after all, was a temptation that More himself faced. He lost his position, his income, and his means of support. One of his concerns while he was in the Tower was the welfare of his family, since he did not know how they would be sustained without him. Anthony comments upon the general insecurity of wealth and property in an image similar to the traditional wheel of fortune. Money, he points out, is more than just land, for if one has to flee, he can take his money with him, but land "we cannot carry one inch" (326). Yet Anthony is aware that over time, all things change drastically. He who is secure today, rich and prosperous, may not be tomorrow. He who boasts of his family connections may be the descendant of beggars and the ancestor of workingmen. The very ground itself upon which a king builds his castle would laugh at the pretensions of the king who tries in such a way to secure his family's destiny: "Ah, thou silly poor soul, that weenest thou were half a god, and art amid thy glory but a man in a gay gown, I that am the ground here over whom thou art so proud have had an hundred such owners of me as thou callest thyself, more than ever thou hast heard the names of. And some of them that proudly went_over mine head lie now low in my belly, and my

side lieth over them" (326-7). Anthony recommends the long term view, that one consider what happens to family and wealth in three thousand years: "In far fewer years than three thousand it may well fortune that a poor plowman's blood may come up to a kingdom, and a king's right royal kin on the other side fall down to the plow and cart, and neither that king know that ever he came from the cart, nor that carter know that ever he came from the crown" (327).

Some men fear the loss of their homeland if they have to flee to foreign parts to escape the persecution of the Turks, as later, men would flee England if they wanted to practice the old faith in some security and freedom. The writer of the Middle Ages often portrayed man as a pilgrim upon the earth; it was a natural image to him. Anthony, too, finds the image natural and fitting. He writes as follows to that effect: "We have here no city nor dwelling country at all, but we seek for one that we shall come to. And in what country soever we walk in this world, we be but as pilgrims and seafaring men" (364). The fear of slavery was a real issue during the Turkish invasions, since the Turks could enslave only non-Moslems. But Anthony points out that we are all in bondage, and this bondage can not be evaded by anyone:

And yet have I left untouched the bondage that
almost every man is in that boasteth himself for
free, the bondage, I mean, of sin which to be a

very bondage I shall have our Saviour Himself to bear me good record. For He saith: "Omnis qui facit peccatum servus est peccati: Every man that committeth sin is the thrall or the bondman of sin" (366).

Note that in almost every case, Anthony's approach to comfort is to tell young Vincent that whatever evil may fall upon him during the persecution by the Turks, that same evil is duplicated in the larger world about him even during times of no persecution. The Turk merely offers on a smaller scale what the world naturally presents on a larger scale.

In one of his finest discussions, Anthony encourages Vincent to stay firm in the faith by pointing out that prison and death are not real threats that can or should deter a man from the truth. In a somber note, Anthony points out that we are all under the sentence of death and we all live in the prison of the world. Even kings are under the sentence of death:

But now we well know that there is no king so great but that all the while he walketh here, walk he never so loose, ride he with never so strong an army for his defence, yet himself is very sure (though he seek in the mean season some other pastime to put it out of his mind), yet is he very sure, I say, that escape can he not, and very well

he knoweth that he hath already sentence given upon him to die, and that verily die he shall, and that himself, though he hope upon long respite of his execution, yet can he not tell how soon, and therefore (but if he be a fool) he can never be without fear that either on the morrow or on the selfsame day the grisly hangman Death which from his first coming in hath ever hoved aloof and looked toward him and ever lien in a wait on him, shall amid among all his royalty and all his main strength neither kneel before him nor make him any reverence nor with any good manner desire him to come forth, but rigorously and fiercely grip him by the very breast and make all his bones rattle, and so by long and divers sore torments strike him stark dead in this prison, and then cause his body to be cast into the ground in a foul pit within some corner of the same, there to rot and be eaten with the wretched worms of the earth, sending yet his soul out further unto a more fearful judgment whereof at his temporal death his success is uncertain, and therefore, though by God's grace not out of good hope, yet for all that in the meanwhile in very sore dread and fear, and peradventure in peril inevitable of eternal fire too (378-379).

These sentences come in a rush to Anthony. He is propelled by the urgency of his situation and the urgency of every man's situation, including even the mighty of the earth. He speaks them all in one long sentence, each phrase following its predecessor in a somber progression until the final horror of eternal fire is reached. It is a morbid and melancholy meditation to those who are not prepared to hear it, who turn their heads away from their true situation; but it is a salutary and fruitful meditation to those who do not flinch at the common human condition. For it is this very meditation upon the last things that More finds to be the cutting edge between fantasy and reality. The world itself is a prison and all men are under the sentence of death:

So the prisoner that you speak of is, beside the narrow prison, a prisoner of the broad world, and all the princes thereof therein prisoners with him; and by that imprisonment both they and he in like danger of death, not by that strain imprisonment that is commonly called imprisonment, but by that imprisonment which, because of the large walk, men call liberty, and which prison you thought but a fantasy sophistical to prove it any prison at all. But now may you, me thinketh, very plainly perceive that this whole earth is not only for all the whole kind of man a very plain prison indeed but also that every man without exception,

even those that are most at their liberty therein and reckon themselves great lords and possessioners of very great pieces thereof, and thereby wax with wantonness so forgetful of their own state that they when they stand in great wealth, do stand for all that indeed, by the reason of their imprisonment in this large prison of the whole earth, in the selfsame condition that other do stand which in the narrow prisons (which only be called prisons and which only reputed prisons in the opinion of the common people) stand in the most fearful and in the most odious case, that is to wit, condemned already to death (379-80).

More is at his best and most powerful in this ingenious and shocking image of the world as a prison. But he is not done with the image, and he carries it a step further, to an even more shocking conclusion. Not only do all men live in the prison of the world, which only those who are lost in fantasy fail to realize, but in this prison of the world, God is the jailer:

In which false persuasion of wealth and forgetfulness of our own wretched state which is but a wandering about for a while in this prison of this world till we be brought unto the execution of death, while we forget with our folly both ourselves and our jail and underjailers, angels

and devils both, and our chief jailer God, too, God that forgetteth not us but seeth us all the while well enough and being sore discontent to see so shrewd rule kept in the jail (beside that he send the hangman Death to put to execution here and there sometime by the thousands at once), He handleth many remnant, whose execution He forbearerh yet unto a farther time, even as hardly and punisheth them as sore in this common prison of the world as there are any handled in those special prisons which for the hard handling used (you say) there in your heart hath in such horror and so sore abhorreth (382-383).

More has thus taken the common beliefs of everyday life and turned them upside down, shown them to be at bottom fantasies. Man has no such choices as he thinks he has. He is no more imprisoned when he is in an actual prison than he is when he is free. What he calls freedom is actually a form of imprisonment. Man's choice is not between prison and liberty as he thinks, as so many who were taking the Oath of Succession thought. His choice is not between life and a painful death, as so many feared it to be. All men are already in prison, and many of them already condemned to a painful death though they do not know it, and all of them condemned to death. No, Anthony points out, the only real choice that a man has is much more restricted, and much simpler; he may choose only between truth and fantasy.

The final consideration that Anthony presses upon Vincent is the importance of meditation upon the Passion of Christ as the remedy for the pains of persecution, as well as the true source of comfort in tribulation. Anthony points out to Vincent that Christ died a shameful and unprovoked death:

Let us, lo, mark and consider this, and weigh well therewithal, that our Master Christ (not the Master only, but the Maker, too, of all this whole world) was not so proud to disdain for our sakes the most villainous and most shameful death after the worldly count that was then used in the world; and the most despiteful mocking therewith joined to most grievous pain, as crowning Him with sharp thorn that the blood ran down about His face; then they gave Him a reed in His hand for a sceptre, and kneeled down to Him and saluted Him like a king in scorn, and beat then the reed upon the sharp thorns about His holy head. Now saith our Saviour that the disciple or servant is not above his master; and therefore, sith our Master endured so many kinds of painful shame, very proud beasts may we well think ourself if we disdain to do as our Master did (398).

This was the meditation that More himself turned to in his own tribulation.

He wrote other works in the Tower--one a meditation upon the Passion of Christ in English and the latin De Tristitia Christi, a meditation upon the suffering of Christ in Gethsemane.⁸ In the latter book, More wrote extensively about Christ's mental anguish as he considered his physical anguish to come. More suggested that one of the reasons why Christ endured such agony "was to comfort the weaker members of His church, who might be driven to desperation by a fear of their own fear" (Haupt xviii). It was perhaps to combat his own fears that More dwelled upon the Passion, that he felt himself to be one of those weaker members who needed the comfort of Christ's endurance of pain as an example for himself. According to Schuster, More's own personality was most subject to fear:

More's prison writings convince us that he excelled in faith, hope, and charity, as well as in prudence, justice, and temperance. But the cardinal virtue of fortitude in the face of physical pain seemed to be a grace he kept struggling to acquire....More than once in dwelling on the four temperaments, he classifies himself as a melancholic and thus naturally prone to fear (42).

Like More, "Antony is ultimately cornered" (Schuster 43). There is simply no way out of the pain and suffering. In the end, More must endure the death prepared for him. He

returns to the Passion of Christ again and again as he approaches his end. "All the wit in the world must yield to More's single source of fortitude: the suffering Christ" (Schuster 43).

Anthony summarizes his own statements about tribulation, and especially that particular tribulation due to religious persecution. All of them find their final resolution in the sufferings of Christ:

"Surely, Cousin, as I said before," he tells Vincent, "in suffering of captivity, thralldom, and imprisonment, and in the glad sustaining of worldly shame, that if we would in all those points deeply ponder the example of our Saviour Himself, it were of itself alone sufficient to encourage every kind of Christian man and woman to refuse none of all these calamities for His sake" (415).

In the end, all of Anthony's advice comes down to a few simple points for meditation. Manley sees the whole of Book III of the Dialogue as "a treatise on the art of meditation" (xxxvi). If this is true, then it is enlightening about More's own devotional practices to see what Anthony tells Vincent that he should meditate on. His parting words to Vincent, his final summation of the source of tribulation and the source of comfort, come almost at the end of the book:

Would God, as I many times have said, that the remembrance of Christ's kindness in suffering His passion for us, the consideration of hell that we should fall in by forsaking of Him, the joyful meditation of eternal life in heaven that we shall win with this short temporal death patiently taken for Him, had so deep a place in our breast as reason would they should and as, if we would do our devoir toward it and labour for it and pray therefore, I verily think they should (417).

Notes

1. Russel Ames in his Introduction to Citizen Thomas More and His Utopia has discussed this issue. "Most controversy concerning More has, however, centered on this question of his consistency. Liberal historians have found him an unfortunate example of that perennial phenomenon the liberal in youth turned conservative with age and Chambers has correctly pointed out that this is nonsense, for More was a good thirty-eight years old when he wrote Utopia. But such historians are able to point out, in their turn, that More opposed religious coercion in Utopia and later, as chancellor, not only persecuted heretics but defended such persecution in theory. Such historians, being philosophical idealists, assume that views should never change, regardless of changing conditions: if one is against war, he should oppose all wars. If one is for tolerance, he should tolerate anyone and everything. Chambers, also a philosophical idealist, also believes that one should not change his views, and claims that More did not. It is probable, however, that More did change his views on religious tolerance gradually, after 1516, under the pressure of such events as the rise of Lutheranism, the knights' and peasants' wars in Germany with the general decline of reformers' hopes in a period of sharpening social

crisis." (Reprinted in More's Utopia and Its Critics, edited by Ligeia Gallagher, Scott, Foreman and Company, 1964)

2. On the importance of persevering to the end, see Bynum, "Tudor Death Stands," Moreana, Vol. 35, pps 31-44. "The twentieth century psychologically oriented mind might interpret the martyrs' actions and wishes as determined by delusions, self-hypnosis, or a Freudian death instinct. But when the rewards of the next world, the eternal world, were so great and life on this temporary abode so low; when earth in the center of the universe was a huge dung heap; when heaven itself was at the top of the fixed stars, how natural it must have been for man to want to soar from this world to the next through death" (43).

3. For a history of the development of the ideal of virginity and chastity in the early Church, see Peter Brown, The Body and Society.

4. Wherever I have used the Yale Edition of the Complete Works of Thomas More, I have indicated that fact with the initials "C.W.".

5 For a history of Passion literature in England, see J.A.W. Bennett, Poetry of the Passion: Studies in Twelve Centuries of English Verse. Bennett comments that English poetry begins with a poem on the Rood (1).

6 I refer the reader to Stephen Greenblatt's discussion of More's imprisonment and execution in his book,

Renaissance Self-Fashioning, for a different picture of More than the one I have given. I disagree with Greenblatt's analysis of More as the actor, one who "fashioned" himself as he went along in response to the events in his life. "More had long conditioned himself, I have argued, to ask himself on all public occasions, 'What would "More" say about this?' and he relies deeply upon this conditioning throughout the final months." I do not find his argument convincing that More was always asking himself this question. Besides, I think Greenblatt personalizes the question too much. More may very well have asked himself on various occasions, what would a lord chancellor do in this situation?, or a Catholic?, or a father?, or a husband? I do not disagree that More played various roles, but that he fashioned some script for himself apart from his public roles, in his "intense individualism", I fail to see. That he reacted to events is clear; that he "refashioned" himself on a continuing basis in response to these events is not so clear. For example, Greenblatt suggests that More decided to depict himself as the "timorous martyr": "In the timorous martyr, then, the martyr who must struggle to accommodate himself to his part, More depicts himself" (72). This statement seems to imply that More could have as easily chosen to depict himself as the rash martyr, the one who rushed upon his execution. I do not agree that More "chose" to fashion himself as the reluctant martyr. I believe that

he was the reluctant martyr and, as Schuster states, was terrified of disembowellment.

7. The quotations from the Dialogue are taken from the modernized version published by Everyman's Library, although I have relied extensively upon the introductory material found in the Yale Edition of the Dialogue found in the Complete Works written by Louis Martz.

See Volume 13 of the Complete Works for A Treatise of the Passion, and Volume 14 for The Sadness of Christ, a translation of De Tristitia Christi by Clarence Miller. More probably did not write the entire Treatise while he was in the Tower, but only put the finishing touches to the book there. Both works have been published together by Yale University Press in a volume entitled The Tower Works: Devotional Writings, edited by Gary E. Haupt.

Chapter Four

Robert Southwell and The Epistle of Comfort

Between the time that Fisher and More wrote their prison books and the time that Southwell and Canfield wrote theirs, some fifty years of changes in the religious situation occurred in England and on the Continent. These changes had a direct impact on later recusant writers such as Southwell and Canfield. In England, the government adopted a policy calling for the slow asphyxiation of the Catholic religion, and the process of religious change begun by Henry VIII slowly evolved into the Anglican Church. The recusants were affected most by the harsh and restrictive legislation against the practice of the Catholic religion, which took place side by side with the establishment of what some recusants called the "new regime" or "new religion" (Allen 3). England changed from a nation with a largely Catholic population of three million in 1500 (Hughes 31) to a nation with a Catholic minority of 750,000 in 1603 (Morey 212). All of these figures are estimates, but it can be reasonably assumed that the Catholic population did not exceed twenty percent of the whole at the turn of the seventeenth century. It was to arrest this decline, and possibly reverse the trend, that the recusants in the latter part of the sixteenth century directed their efforts. Their writings were

aimed at giving aid and comfort to those Catholic suffering under an increasingly harsh government policy.

Henry VIII had no great penchant for change in religious matters, although he did implement the Act of Succession, which made him head of the Church in England and established the succession on the offspring of his marriage with Ann Bolyn. This was the Act that required an Oath of Supremacy to Henry VIII as head of the Church, and both Fisher and More were made its victims. Both were willing to swear allegiance to the royal succession, which had been legitimately established by Parliament, but they were unwilling to swear to Henry's supremacy over the Church of England. Henry went further in 1539, when he had the Convocation of Bishops draw up the Ten Articles, which he made the law of the land. The Ten Articles were "in general a reaffirmation of the Catholic faith" (Grimm 247), but they did omit the word "transubstantiation" from the ritual of the Eucharistic service, they did reduce the number of sacraments from seven to three, and they did deny that "the Roman Catholic Church could release souls from Purgatory" (Grimm 248). Henry later put out the Six Articles, which in important respects reversed the Ten Articles, and restored the word "transubstantiation" to the service. IN 1543, the Bishops' Book was published for use in all English Churches. It clearly upheld transubstantiation, made no distinctions between the scriptural and non-scriptural sacraments, and

upheld the importance of prayers for the dead (Dickens 184). In the last years of his reign, Henry allowed Cranmer to begin work on a new communion service in English, which would have changed one of the central features of the Catholic practice of religion--the Latin Mass. Henry died before the new service was ready.

Under Edward VI, further changes were made, all of them placing the new church farther away from the old. In 1552, the second Book of Common Prayer was made compulsory in England, and it called for services in English, which for all practical purposes eliminated the Latin Mass. Mary Tudor affected a restorative of England to Rome, but her Spanish marriage and her attempts to restore Church lands which had been expropriated from private use to their original owners caused her effectiveness to be blunted. In 1559, under Elizabeth, the final two cornerstones were put into place for the establishment of the Anglican Church. The Act of Supremacy established Elizabeth as governor of the Church in England, a denial of papal supremacy which was a key article for Catholics. The Act of Uniformity made the Book of Common Prayer the controlling book for English services and provided fines and imprisonment for those who failed to attend the new services. Hence the title of "recusant" was born, which referred to those who refused to attend Anglican services.

There were two other key events that heavily influenced the treatment of Catholic missionaries in England. One was the excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570 by the Pope. Exactly what this Bull of Excommunication meant was hotly debated by Catholics and Protestants. The Bull did not require English Catholics to overthrow the Queen, only gave them permission to do so. However, English Catholics could remain loyal to the Queen in all civil matters if they chose to do so. Yet this was hardly a distinction which would prove acceptable to the English government, and Catholics acquired the reputation of being traitors. No one was seen as more treasonable as the Catholic missionaries who were coming into England from Catholic countries abroad. The English insinuated that these missionaries were the advance party of a papal army which would soon invade England.

In 1585, Parliament passed an act which declared all priests in England who had been ordained overseas to be traitors and gave them forty days to quit the realm. Failure to comply would result in a traitor's death, complete with hanging and disembowellment. Since there were no Catholic bishops in England to ordain new priests, and the only native priests were those ordained under Mary and now slowly dying off, this Act meant the virtual extinction of the practice of Catholicism in England. Elizabeth even authorized the use of the "bloody question"; that is, seminary priests could be asked: "If England were attacked,

would they support Elizabeth or a foreign army bearing the Pope's approbation?" (Haugaard 327). Thus treason could be defined by one's answer to a hypothetical question. To answer by giving their unqualified support to the Queen would, at least implicitly, deny the supremacy of the Pope. To answer by giving support to the Pope was, by definition, an act of treason.

To counter these charges of treason, Catholic priests who were sent to England were prohibited from becoming engaged in politics at all. They were told to limit their activities to providing religious instructions and services. They were not to discuss the Queen, nor to engage in any political discussions involving the royal succession or Catholic activities in Europe directed at England, nor even to mention the Queen in their reports back to their superiors. Yet Catholic priests, like Allen and Persons, were involved in political activities in Europe concerned with replacing the Queen. All such political activity was to cease the moment the priests set foot in England. This distinction between politics abroad and politics at home was faithfully observed by missionaries like Southwell and Canfield. It was not, however, a distinction that was likely to be recognized by the English Government. The missionaries always expressed their loyalty to the Queen, although it would have been unrealistic to expect that staunch Catholics would not wish for a restoration of Cath-

olicism, a change which would be possible only if a new sovereign ascended the throne. Thus missionaries like Southwell were caught in a hopeless dilemma, and generally went to the scaffold with courage and stoicism, protesting their loyalty to the Queen.

Robert Southwell was well aware of the dangerous situation faced by missionaries such as himself and, in 1591, addressed an appeal to the Queen to soften the restrictive measures against Catholic missionaries. In An Humble Supplication to Her Majestie, he assured the Queen that Catholic priests were coming into England for religious purposes only, and he protested against the charge that they were plotting against the government:

And first we Crave most humblye, but the right of Christians, believe our oath, which is the only Certificate to make our thoughts undoubted: upon hope whereof we oppose our guiltless hearts against these titles, as our best Armour of proce; protesting upon our souls and salvations, and calling Allmighty god and his Angells for witnesses, that as we hope to have any benefit by the most pretious wounds and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole and only intent of our coming into this Realme, is noe other but to labour for the salvation of soules, and in peaceable and quiet sort to confirme them in the auntient Catho-

lique Faith in which their Forefathers lived and died these 1400 years, and out of which we undoubtedly believe it is impossible that any soule should be saved (119).

Southwell then asks the Queen how the practice of the Catholic religion could be considered treasonable when it had been practiced openly in England for 1400 years prior to the establishment of the new religion:

For this cannot any way be treasonable to your Majesties estate, unless that be esteemed offensive which was the Faith of all your royall ancestors this 14. hundreth years, is the Faith of the greatest part of Christendome, and for the defence whereof your Majesties most worthy Father attayned the glorious title of Defendor of the Faith? (13).

Southwell defends Catholics from the charge of treason by affirming their loyalty to the Queen and to the realm:

It is a point of the Catholique Faith..that Subjects bound in Conscience, under paine of forfeiting their right in Heaven, and incurring the guilt of eternal torments, to obey the just lawes of their Princes (16).

Southwell was not the first to protest the innocence of Catholics to these charges of treason. Nicholas Sander, in his Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism (1585), writes

that Catholic priests entering England from abroad are considered to be guilty of treason:

All the Jesuits, all the priests and students of the two foreign Colleges, are declared guilty of high treason, and said to be contrivers of divers conspiracies against the queen and the state...(310).

He protests, as Southwell later did, that Catholic priests are being persecuted, not for treason, but for their religion:

It would answer no purpose to recount...the offenses for which these innocent persons were so inhumanly punished, for everyone knows that the true and only reason for their profession of the old religion, and their defense of the Apostolic See, and communion therewith, against the rebel children of the Church (320).

William Allen, in his A True, Sincere and Modest Defence of English Catholiques (1584), also defended Catholics against the imputation of treason and accused the Government of acting in bad faith in its persecution of Catholics. He compared the persecution of Catholics to the earlier persecution of Christians in Apostolic times:

And it might not onlie be applied by the olde heathen or heretical persecution, against the first Apostles and Martirs of Christ, being fals-

lie charged with the same crimes as we be now, and answered for themselves as we doe...(Preface 5).

He complained that the contest between the state and individual Catholics was an uneven one, that the state possessed powers of coercion, and controlled the flow of information, and was able to place its actions under the rubric of national security:

For Princes and communities in disorder have a thousand pretenses, excuses, or coulors, of this unjust action: they have the name of authorities, the shadows of lawes, the pennes and tongues of infinite at their commaundment: they may print or publish what they like, suppress what they list: whereof private men, be they never so wicked or good, have not so great commoditie (5).

Allen also protests that Catholics are being persecuted for their religion, and for no other reason. He claims that the government is libelling Catholics in claiming that they are rebels and traitors:

Now to the principle pointes of the Libel: we first affirme that the verie front or title thereof, (importing that no Catholikes at al, or none of them whom they have executed, were persecuted for their religion) is a verie notorious untruth, and contradictorie to the libellers owne wordes in his discourse following where he confes-

seth underhand, that some be corrected otherwise for religion: or (if they will stand in the contrarie) we appeale to the conscience and knowledge of al the Catholikes and protestants within the Realme, who of the equitie will never denie, that most prisons in England be ful at this daye, and have beene for divers yeaes, of honorable and honest persons not to be touched with anie treason, or other offence in the world, other that their profession and faith in the Christian religion (A).

This was the state of affairs and climate of opinion existing in England when Southwell and Canfield began their missionary endeavors. There was still a large body of Catholics in England which needed to be ministered to. It was to minister to these Catholics that motivated the missionaries to endanger their lives in the 1570's which has led Scarisbrick to indicate in The Reformation and the English People that the Bull of Excommunication directed against Elizabeth may have been more effective than commonly supposed (147). He has also pointed out that there was no great groundswell of public opinion in favor of the Anglican religion, that it was imposed on the people from above (61). There was still a yearning found among the aristocracy and the lower classes for the restoration of the old religion. He has commented upon the recent writings of recusant his-

tory which has stressed "how tenacious and widespread was the survival of the old religion during and after Elizabeth's reign" (137). Haugaard has also remarked on the tenacious survival of the old religion in England:

it was not, by and large, respect for papal authority which led men and women to reject the national church and her new ways. Rather, they loved the familiar pattern of church life: the Latin mass, the regular shriving, the invocation of favorite saints, the anointing on the death-bed, the liturgical petitions for family and friends who had died. To (Catholics) these things, with the teachings that underlay them, belonged to the heart of the Christian faith, and they would not give them up (321).

Several events occurred on the Continent which gave impetus and direction to the changes which were taking place in Catholicism, and these events affected the wavering and uncertain Catholics who remained in England. The Jesuit Order was founded by Ignatius Loyola and this resulted in the sending of missionaries into England to restore the old faith and minister to those Catholics who still remained. Cardinal Allen established a Catholic seminary in Douai for the training of Englishmen in the traditional faith. He directed several of his brightest pupils to the Jesuit seminary in Rome, where they were trained as missionaries

and directed back to the English mission. His establishment at Douai also provided a base for Englishmen fleeing religious persecution and became an intellectual center for the English Catholic Church. From Douai issued a new translation of the Bible into English by Gregory Martin.

The Council of Trent, which met in three sessions from 1545 to 1563, redefined the nature of Catholicism. It not only restated those doctrines which were most under attack by the Protestants, such as the necessity of good works, the existence of Purgatory, the necessity and existence of seven sacraments, but it also put into effect decrees to restore order and sanctity in the Church.¹ It also introduced a reforming spirit into the Church, and a new militancy to consolidate its own position and possibly reconquer those lands which had been lost. It released a new energy into art and literature, stressing their importance in the service of the Church.

The spirit of the Council of Trent can be seen operating in the new order founded by Ignatius Loyola. Ignatius' whole life had been changed by an incident which occurred at the siege of Pampelona, when French troops attacked the small garrison manned by a handful of Spanish troops. Ignatius was struck by a bullet and his leg was shattered. He was carried back to his home at Loyola where he underwent a lengthy recovery period. He endured two painful and primitive operations to reset his leg, but neither of them suc-

ceeded and he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. His dreams to be a knight in the service of the Queen were shattered along with his leg, so he eventually turned his thoughts to a new type of knighthood. It is interesting that his new fervor was assisted by the reading of certain books, one of which was the Golden Legend, that compilation of the lives of martyred saints so popular in the Middle Ages. Ignatius slowly changed from a knight in the service of the earthly queen to a spiritual knight in the service of God. It is significant that when he came to offer himself to the service of God, he traveled to the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat. Located in the mountains of Catalunya, it was here that young Spaniards often came to spend a night in vigil before a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary before enlisting in the ranks of Spanish knighthood. This practice of spending the night in vigil before their armor, placing themselves in the service of the heavenly queen, was traditional for Spanish knights. But it was not to the earthly knighthood that Ignatius dedicated himself, but to a spiritual knighthood. From henceforth he would be a "Caballeria a lo divino" and partake of "divine" chivalry (Daniel-Rops 29).

The idea of spiritual knighthood, joined with the new forces of the Council of Trent, was to set in motion the Catholic effort to reconquer the lands lost to Protestantism. Catholic missionaries spread throughout the globe,

often alone and unprotected, in the service of God. Jesuit missionaries were to travel as far afield as China and Japan; Franciscans were to travel into the New World discovered by Columbus. Missionaries carried the Christian cross into North Africa and Southeast Asia. It did not seem impossible to these men that the entire world could be claimed for Christ. Jesuit missionaries were also sent into England.

Ignatius organized his followers into a unit with discipline that was military in its intensity. He stressed obedience to the Pope as the hallmark of the new order. At one point Ignatius saw his destiny, and the destiny of those that followed him as leader of a spiritual crusade to reconquer the Holy Land. Had it not been for Turkish navies operating in the Mediterranean, he would have gone to Palestine in the attempt to win back the Holy Land for Christianity. After the failure of this personal crusade, he turned back to Rome and placed himself under the command of the Pope. Two ideas became fused in the development of his new order. One was the military model of the knight in the service of God, clearly shown by his original plan to launch a new crusade. The second was that the battle for souls would not be fought primarily with military weapons, but with spiritual weapons. Just as the soldier was prepared to shed his blood for his king or queen, so the new spiritual knight was prepared to shed his blood in the cause of God.

Martyrdom became an acceptable price to pay in the battle for souls. When a Jesuit seminary was established at the old English hospice in Rome, depictions of martyrs of the past to include their sufferings and triumphs, became an artistic motif spread on the walls of the new school:

Even the walls of the house were covered with pictures of the scaffold and torture-chamber and the college itself earned the respectful sobriquet of Seminarium Martyrum. Every normal emotion of human love, ambition and patriotism was harnessed to this end (Plowden 141).

A "School for Martyrs" became an appropriate title for the Jesuit Seminary in Rome.

The idea of martyrdom as the highest form of death, one to be accepted with joy, was one of the most distinctive and controversial features of the Catholic missionary effort in England. Much of this controversy surrounding the deaths of the missionary priests can be attributed to the English Government's effort to portray them not as true martyrs but as foolish young men, confused and misled, rushing to obtain a false martyr's crown. The alacrity with which these men underwent torture and a public execution is often misunderstood. Plowden states that the inability of the modern mind to grasp the motivation of such martyrs as Edmund Campion is fueled by the modern proclivity to find "guilt complexes" and "death wishes" at the bottom of it all (151). There is

no doubt that these Jesuit missionaries felt guilt, but it was not a specific or personal guilt, but a general one. They felt themselves to be sinful men, as all human beings are sinful. Being men, they were guilty of committing the sins that caused the crucifixion of Christ. What Southwell and the other Jesuits tried to do through their spiritual exercises was to place their attention on Christ and the sufferings he underwent. Christ was a victim, not because he had no choice in the matter, but because he willingly chose to be one. He chose to suffer and die because he loved men. He could have easily avoided the whole ordeal had he chosen to do so.

The idea that the missionaries like Southwell were actually operating from some form of death-wish was advanced by some of their contemporaries. John Donne, for example, wrote a book about suicide in which he discussed the avidity for martyrdom found in the early Church. Donne did not express the notion of martyrdom in terms of a death-wish in modern format, but the very fact that he discussed martyrdom under the rubric of suicide would indicate that he believed it to be sometimes an expression of the death wish. Donne looked at some types of martyrdom as a failure to observe the law of self-preservation. That he placed the idea of martyrdom in a questionable moral status, that he saw it as possibly a form of suicide, makes him germane to this dis-

cussion. Avidly seeking martyrdom is not necessarily a virtuous action in the moral thought of Donne:

God forbid that any should be so malignant as to misinterpret me, as though I either thought the blood of martyrs was not the seed of the church or diminished their dignity. Yet it befits candor to confess that those times were afflicted with a disease of this natural desire for such a death, and to such may fruitfully be applied those words of the good Paulinus, "The athlete does not win just because he undresses, nor do they swim to the far shore just because they strip off their clothes." Alas! We may sink and drown at the last stroke. To sail to heaven it is not enough to cast away the burdensome superfluities that we have long carried about us, but we must also take in good freight. It is not lightness but an even-reposed steadfastness that carries us there (Suicide 24).

Martyrdom might very well be a form of suicide, at least according to Donne. He reacts almost in horror to some of the stories from the early Church concerning those who sought martyrdom too zealously: "For that age had grown so hungry and ravenous for it that many were baptized only because they would be burned, and children were taught to vex and provoke executioners so they might be thrown into

the fire" (25). He skirts close to the modern idea of the death-wish when he admits that "very many died out of a natural infirmity of despising this life " (26).

Donne addressed the very problem of the Jesuit martyrs in his book Pseudo-Martyr. Donne did not deny the value of martyrdom, but he denied martyrdom to those who died for the Catholic faith in England. First, he did not believe that there could ever be a separation between religious and civil, that one could be a good citizen of the English state and at the same time deny the established religion. Second, he denied the primacy of the Catholic Church, at least insofar as it was centered in Rome and in the Papacy. "So to offer our lives for the defence of the Catholique faith, hath ever beene a religious custome, but to cal every pretence of the Pope, Catholique faith, and to bleede to death for it, is a sicknesse and a medicine, which the Primitive Church never understood" (Pseudo-Martyr C3). Donne claimed the blood of martyrs was no longer needed. Christ was already in possession of the world, and therefore did not need martyrs to establish a new religion (8). Donne also denied Catholics the status of martyrs because Protestants in the established Church did not differ from them in any key points of doctrine, so their witness was unnecessary. None of the reasons brought forth to justify the Catholic martyrs really applied "because no point of Catholique faith, either primary or radicall or issuing from

thence by necessary deduction and consequence, is impugned by us" (13). Lastly he claimed that the Catholic martyrs sought death too avidly and that they thus broke the law of self-preservation:

"How hungerie of poyson, how Ambitious of ruine, how pervious and penetrable to all meanes of destruction are you, upon whom your Jesuits and other Confessors, have not onely the force of those men, who are said to have beene able to kill men by looking upon them in anger, but of those also, which can bewitch by faire words, and can prayse a man to death?" (D2).

Donne claimed that the Catholic martyrs ran "desperately into the danger of the Law" (D3). Without a real difference in religion to defend, such martyrs were only apparent martyrs.

According to such men as Southwell, though, Donne would be said to have missed the whole point. First of all, to Southwell, there were real differences in religion. It was not only the primacy of the Pope that Southwell was defending, but what he saw as the very practice of the Catholic religion itself. For the Anglican settlement had outlawed not only Papal supremacy, but also the Mass and five of the seven sacraments, which Catholics considered vital for salvation. It was easy for Donne to declare the differences minor when he did not believe the disputed points were that

significant, and he did not believe in the efficacy of the sacraments Southwell was defending. However, Southwell felt that without the Mass and the sacraments, there was no Catholic religion. Secondly, the Catholic missionaries such as Southwell did not zealously seek out death. For if they had, they would not have hidden for days at a time in rather cramped "priest-holes" trying to escape the pursuivants.

This is not to deny that Southwell was desirous of martyrdom. The martyr's crown was the highest reward that a Christian could achieve in this life. Southwell had not only been trained as a soldier in the army of God, willing to lay down his life at a moment's notice, but he looked to the martyr's crown as the ultimate achievement of the Christian. Perhaps this is one of the biggest changes that took place between More and Southwell, the militancy that grew in the latter part of the century. More was the reluctant martyr, temporizing as long as he could to put off the inevitable. He did not feel himself worthy of the martyr's crown and protested his own inability to endure extreme pain. Southwell was of a different breed. He turned to the early Church not for arguments and reasons to fortify the Catholic cause against the Protestants, but for examples of martyrs who went bravely to their deaths:

The Protestants had appealed to the Fathers of the Church for their position; Southwell uses the Fathers, principally St Cyprian, to refute

them. A persecuted Church was something that had parallels only in the early Christian centuries; and...in...Southwell's judgement..., the Christians of North Africa in the time of Cyprian offered the nearest analogy to the position of Catholics in England in the last decades of the sixteenth century (Waugh xiii).

Southwell and his contemporaries turned to these early martyrs for solace and courage. They did not shrink from the physical pain that so often accompanied the martyr's death. Such deeds were celebrated in prose and poetry. There is a poem, for example, by Richard Verstegan (1601), in which he praises the martyrdom of certain holy women in the early Church. Physical suffering is the very essence of the poem. Although no one can claim aesthetic merit for this production, a few stanzas should give a good example of the state of mind of some Catholics undergoing persecution and martyrdom:

The loyal Appolonia,
Withstood the pagan laws:
For which with violence her teeth,
Were torn from out her jaws. (Stanza 62)

When blest Blandina had the rack,
And sundry tortures past:

Unto a bul wrapt in a net,
 She was with fury caste. (Stanza 61)

To offer to the Idol Gods,
 Cecilia did refuse:
 And contumelies, paynes, and death,
 Contented was to chuse.
 And in a skalding caldron cast,
 And thyrce strook with the sword. (Stanza 62)²

What these verses lack in quality, perhaps they make up in fervor, especially to those Catholics facing a similar fate.

The other great impetus to martyrdom, and perhaps the greatest comfort and solace, was the Passion of Christ. The English martyrs saw themselves in biblical contexts and tried to live their lives in imitation of Christ. This was the same solace sought by More and Fisher in their extremity. As we have seen, More wrote an extended meditation upon the Passion. Southwell, too, devoted himself to meditation upon the Passion. In this, of course, he was partly implementing the Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, who had devoted an extended time to thinking about the sufferings of Christ. Southwell saw himself as living in imitation of the life of Christ. For example, at his trial, when he asked how old he was, he replied that "he was about the same age as our Saviour, viz. thirty-three" (Hood 58). Richard Top-

cliffe, Southwell's interrogator and torturer, considered such a response blasphemous.

Robert Southwell returned to England from the Jesuit seminary in Rome in the company of a fellow Jesuit, Henry Garnet, in 1586. The two split up for extended periods in order to avoid capture. Southwell spent part of his missionary years in the residence of Ann Dacres, the Countess of Arundel, who maintained a home in London on the Strand. Philip Howard, the Earl of Arundel, was in the Tower of London at the time, imprisoned for his Catholic faith. Southwell found safe haven in her home, and he became the spiritual director to both her and her husband. Philip Howard had been received into the Catholic Church in 1584. No doubt many factors entered into his conversion, but one of them was reportedly his presence at the trial of Edmund Campion in 1581, when the young Jesuit's responses to the Protestant divines who questioned him deeply impressed the Earl (Janelle 41). He tried unsuccessfully to escape to the Continent and was captured en route and placed in the Tower. In 1589, he was tried before the King's Bench and found guilty of treason. Although sentenced to a traitor's death, the sentence was never carried out and he was left to languish in the Tower. It was in these circumstances that Southwell became his spiritual director.

The Earl of Arundel was an important person in Catholic circles, and the Jesuits were especially interested in him,

not only as an individual soul in need of comfort but also as a possible leader of the Catholic party, should circumstances in England change sufficiently to allow the open practice of the Catholic religion. Such an eventuality did not seem out of the question at the time. Even if there were no further religious changes in England, the Earl was an important symbol of the Catholic faith, a high-ranking member of the aristocracy who had opted for the old faith. His mere presence in the Tower made him an important example for others who were suffering similar persecution. He was kept in isolation, and he was not allowed to see his wife or family. He was subjected to heavy fines and was forced to see his inheritance dwindle. He could not help but be a source of courage and resolution for others. It was to the Earl of Arundel that Southwell addressed his Epistle of Comfort to bolster his faith and encourage him to persist in his new-found faith, even if it led to martyrdom.

Southwell became a nocturnal creature while he was in residence at the Arundel House, a virtual prisoner during the day, only daring to go out at night to minister to his flock. "For the space of almost two years he was compelled to live in the utmost secrecy at the house of the countess" (Janelle 42). It was during these times of enforced leisure, living in a secluded and little used part of the house, that Southwell began to compose the Epistle of Comfort. He completed it in 1578 and he may very well have

printed it himself on a printing press which he operated at Arundel house (White 243). The imprint of an early printed version says "Imprinted at Paris," but this was a common practice to throw off the authorities. The completed edition of the Epistle was probably an elaboration of a shorter series of letters that Southwell wrote to the Earl as his spiritual director. Southwell himself tells us that he put the letters through a heavy revision before they were published:

Having written this Epistle of Comfort to an especial friend of mine, and not thinking at the first to let it pass any further, not only the time to which it principally serveth, but the entreaty of diverse, enforced me so far that I could not but condescend to the publishing of the same, though it cost me no small labour in altering the style (Southwell 1).

The book, like the earlier one by More, is designed to give comfort to those afflicted for their faith. But there is a major difference, as pointed out by Waugh, in that More wrote in an almost avuncular style, giving advice in a warm and easy manner, employing homely metaphors and humorous anecdotes, while Southwell wrote as a "passionate pastor of souls" (Waugh xii). The difference in tone is striking, although the thoughts themselves are not so different. Just as More gave reasons to derive comfort from tribulation, so

Southwell listed twelve considerations in twelve chapters for deriving solace in times of grave religious peril. There are four additional chapters which point out the fate of heretics and the glorious reception of martyrs in Heaven. In fact, much of the whole Epistle is a call to martyrdom:

It hath been always a laudable custom in God's Church for such as were afflicted in time of persecution to comfort one another, not only by continual prayer and good works but also by letters and books (Southwell 3).

Southwell, like Fisher and More before him, uses a metaphor derived from nature to describe the Protestant Reformation. Fisher had described it as a dark cloud, More as a storm at sea, and Southwell refers to it as the "foggy night of heresy" (3). He refers to the "confusion of tongues" in England, the various doctrines being taught by the Reformers, and refers to his own writings as "Catholic, though, broken, speeches" (3-4).

Because Southwell saw that language would play a key role in the missionary effort, his own writing changed considerably during the course of his short career. Janelle places Southwell's development as an artist in terms of the progress from an almost Italian preciousness in his early writings to a far leaner and clearer prose in his last writings. His early writings represent what Janelle interestingly calls "the weaker side of his personality, in which

a taste for neatness, for prettiness, for practical fretwork and arabesque, combines with a tenderness which is sweet and touching indeed, yet too clever in its expression to sound really deep" (140). He attributes his early preciousness to his Jesuit education, which stressed Italian models for the developing artist. Janelle finds the Epistle to be one of Southwell's pivotal works, in which he largely abandoned the early wit and cleverness and began to write with force and directness.

Southwell's prose works have been largely neglected in the writing of English literary history. There is a tendency to see the writings of English recusants as foreign and out of the mainstream of native English prose. Much of the English Catholic writing of the sixteenth century was written on the Continent, often in Latin. Yet we know that much of it was written in English and printed in England by clandestine printing presses, like those operated by Robert Persons or Southwell himself. Even those works not printed by secret presses were often circulated in manuscript among the Catholic reading public as well as the Protestant. Francis Bacon wrote a letter to his brother Anthony inclosing a copy of Southwell's Humble Supplication and advised his brother that it was well worth copying out:

Good brother I send to you the Supplication which
Mr. Topcliffe lent me. It is curiously written,

and worth the writing out; though the argument be bad (Quoted in Devlin, 254).

This letter indicates that Southwell had an influence far beyond the limited Catholic circles that he frequented.

If one reads Southwell's later prose after reading, for example, Lodge or Lyly, one is struck by its directness and simplicity. And if one comes to it after reading what Lewis calls the "drab prose" of Harpsfield, one is struck with Southwell's color and balance. It is in the area of "transitional prose" (Lewis 272) that Southwell can be placed. It is worthwhile looking at Lewis' description of utilitarian prose to place Southwell:

Nothing in literature is so 'desperately mortal' as a stylish prose. On the other hand, the prose of men who are intent upon their matter and write only to be understood tends, not quite fairly, to gain from the passage of time (English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, 272).

Southwell, of course, did not see himself as a transitional figure but was writing under the pressure of current events with a practical purpose in mind. The religious controversialists of the sixteenth century, as well as the devotional writers, are the ones we can look to as pioneers in the development of a useful and supple literary language. The writers embroiled in the Martin Marprelate controversy, along with the Catholic recusants, furnish plentiful

examples of the change taking place in the writing of prose in the sixteenth century. It is interesting that both parties were writing under the pressures of official disapproval. When the desire to be understood, to encourage and persuade, overcomes the desire to be appreciated and admired, then a useful and plain literary language is forged.

Southwell thus becomes a transitional figure not because of the influence he may have exercised upon future writers, but because he combined within his prose the simplicity of the drab writers with the rhythm and color of the more polished. This balance between the plain and the adorned makes Southwell one of the best prose writers of the sixteenth century. Philip Caraman, in his "Foreward" to the modern edition of the Epistle of Comfort, cites the literary historian Richard Simpson's judgement of the work:

Simpson saw in the Epistle the finest literary expression of the persecuted Catholic community, and rightly judged it comparable, and in many ways superior, to the recognized masterpieces of Elizabethan prose (v).

Caraman himself refers to the "stylistic perfection" of the work (v-vi), which a careful reading shows to be only slightly hyperbolic. Unfortunately, Southwell has been neglected, especially his writings in prose, and this may be due to the fact that he was on the losing side in the

religious battle that took place in sixteenth century England. In addition, one suspects, there are the circumstances of his imprisonment and death, a rather brutal procedure which provides an embarrassment to the cult of Elizabeth I so popular with Spenser and other poets. There is also a tendency to dismiss Southwell much as his prosecutors did at his trial--a "boy priest" not really worthy of serious consideration.³ A fresh reading of the Epistle, though, shows it to be a masterpiece of English prose and Southwell to be one of those rare individuals who wrote poetry and prose with equal facility.

Southwell began his Epistle, much as More began his Dialogue, with the proposition that tribulation is a sign of God's favor. More attributed this to the Biblical idea that God chastises those He loves. Southwell, though, believed that persecution is the work of the devil, and since the devil is working hard to finish off the Catholic cause, persecution is a sure indication that Catholics are out of the devil's hands. The devil obviously would not persecute those who were working in his cause:

It must greatly comfort all who have been reclaimed from schism or heresy or from a dissolute life to a constant profession of the Catholic faith, to be persecuted for that cause by the devil and his instruments. For it is a very sure sign that they have been delivered out of his

power and are now accounted sheep of God's flock, since otherwise he would never pursue them so heavily (5).

Waugh has commented upon Southwell's use of animal imagery in the Epistle. Most of this imagery he drew from books, but he perhaps learned more about hunting and falconry from his companion, Father Gerard, since Catholic missionaries often went disguised as gentlemen, and some knowledge of falconry would have been useful to carry off such a disguise. In addition, there was a new interest in natural history at the time stimulated by the establishment of a zoo at the Tower of London (Waugh xiv).

Yet one of Southwell's most repeated images was that of a ship. He used it throughout the Epistle. Imagery of ships and sailing became his almost natural way of expression. In one such image, at the beginning of his book, he compared the island of England to a ship, and those who were persecuting the Catholics as the passengers on the ship. The use of ship imagery is not peculiar to Southwell; in fact, it would be difficult to find a major writer of the Elizabethan age who did not use such imagery. The following passage not only expresses Southwell's interest in the sea, but also shows his mastery of style, his fine balance in the use of clauses:

And as the ship, while it is upon the main sea, is
in a manner a castle or commonwealth by itself,

and having all the sails hoisted up and swollen with the wind, and the banners displayed, danceth with a very lofty shew upon the waves and allureth every eye to its pride; but when it is come into the haven, it is straightway ransaked by the searcher, forced to pay custom; and the sails being gathered, the banners taken in, the anchors cast, it lieth quietly at ride and is little regarded. So they, who while they sailed upon the surges of worldly vanities and followed the tide of a conscienceless course might range uncontrolled, and having the favorable gale of authority to waft them forward, and honours and pomp to set them forth, were admired of the people; but if they chance, by God's calling, to retire themselves into the port of true faith and virtuous life to work their salvation, they are straightway searched and sacked, their sails gathered, the accustomed wind set, their glory disgraced, and they little or nothing esteemed (9-10).

The image is well-sustained throughout this lengthy citation. Like a good analogy, it is consistent and explanatory. Stylistically the citation consists of two sentences, both of which begin with long and graceful periods and end with short bursts. The very rhythm

represents the action described the long voyage, the ship graceful upon the ocean, followed by port and the harried actions of men searching and registering the ship, represented by the short clauses at the end. Ascribing vanity and pomp to the passengers of the ship, which represents the commonwealth, is a traditional image. One example is The Ship of Fools by Sebastian Brandt, which was published in an English translation by Alexander Barclay in 1509.

Southwell described suffering as medicine from God, just as More did before him. Those who have strayed away from the word of God are called "patients", and are such as "God often giveth medicines unto, because he intendeth to restore them to perfect health; but such as are so far gone that by ordinary course of physic they are not likely to be recovered, he suffereth to do what best liketh their fantasy without controlment" (17). Suffering, therefore, is a mark of God's favor and special concern for the soul. Those should be worried who do not suffer at all.

The peculiar temptation faced by those suffering imprisonment and possible death for their faith is the natural desire simply to surrender. The Earl of Arundel, for example, to whom Southwell addressed the Epistle, had been in prison for two years, separated from his wife and all the comforts, pleasures, and distractions that his wealth could easily have provided. All he had to do was

simply give in, take the oath of allegiance to Elizabeth, and go home. During the long years of imprisonment, it must have been at times an almost overwhelming temptation. Southwell would have known this, although he was not to experience the temptation himself until several years later. To sustain the determination of the people to persist was one of the primary motives for his writing. Southwell called upon all his rhetorical powers. Literature would have been considered another means for the salvation of souls, hence a part of his missionary activity. Southwell used an analogy from Clement of Alexandria to express his own distaste for the spirit of compromise, for those who had surrendered were enjoying the pleasures of worldly prosperity, while those like the Earl continued to suffer confinement and deprivation. He compared those who enjoyed worldly prosperity at the expense of their spiritual principles to an Egyptian temple:

And Clement of Alexandria compareth such to the profane temples of the Egyptians. If you look on them you shall first see very sumptuous and stately buildings, garnished about with variety of marbles, portraitures and curious works. Within, the first rooms are adorned and decked with gorgeous furniture and great majesty, but if you go into the most secret chapels to view the god for whose honour all this solemnity and

preparation is used, you shall find some ugly viper or crocodile or some other venomous serpent. So it is with those who enjoy prosperity in this world. If you consider their houses, they are costly and glorious; if you view their bodies, they are personable and comely; but if you enter their inmost room and consider what is harbored in all this bravery you shall not find a clean image of God, but in place thereof a monstrous, ugly and sinful soul in the state of damnation (21).

We see in this passage not only Southwell's mastery of the sustained analogy, which lends color and concreteness to his writing, but also one of his typical stylistic traits. The paragraph begins with a colorful picture presented in smooth sentences. One is almost beguiled into an enjoyment of the imagery and rhythm alone. But then, at the end, the point is driven home with shorter clauses. It is this transition from the smooth and easy rhythm to short clauses at the end to drive home the point which is so distinctive of his style.

Southwell is expert in his use of imagery. His writing is sprinkled with colorful and rich imagery, which not only delights but clearly gets the point across. He deals in contrasts, mainly the contrast of the life of the spirit with the life of the world. Imagery makes clear that the life of the world, which appears so appealing to the

worldling, is ugly when seen with spiritual eyes; and conversely, the life of the spirit, which appears onerous to the fleshly eye, is actually beautiful to the spiritual eye. Southwell uses the Augustinian notion that all sin resides in the choice of the inferior thing to the superior, the choosing of the worldly thing over the spiritual reality which is so much greater, although not apparent to the fleshly eye. Southwell compares the soul to a fisherman, angling for pleasure under the direction of the devil:

For when he moveth us to labour our wits and settle on these inferior things, what doth he persuade us, but with a golden hook, to fish in a filthy puddle and sink where nothing can be gotten but venomous and unsavoury vermin (24).

The contrast between the "golden hook" and the "filthy puddle" provides a colorful exposition of Southwell's idea.

In a truly Ignatian image, Southwell compares the Catholics to soldiers under the command of their captain Christ. This army must conquer through suffering, not by force of arms, and in this way they follow the very example of Christ himself: "Our Captain lieth not on the hard ground, but hangeth naked and nailed to a reproachful cross" (32). Southwell, like More and Fisher, was devoted to the Passion of Christ. He offers us an interesting image of the Passion as a book, which it was necessary to study and learn from:

For other was the effect of Christ's passion on St Paul, who being enflamed with the force of so unusual an example laboured himself to be a perfect scholar in this doctrine, esteeming it the highest and most needful point of Christian knowledge to understand the value, necessity and manner of patient sufferance. He would have no other university but Jerusalem, no other school but Mount Calvary, no other pulpit but the cross, no other reader but the crucifix, no other letters but his wounds, no other commas but his lashes, no other full points but his nails, no other book but his open side, and finally no other lesson but to know Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). In this school should be our chiefest study. Here should we learn by Christ's nakedness how to clothe ourselves; by his crown of thorns how to adorn ourselves; by his vinegar and gall how to diet ourselves; and by his painful and bitter death how to esteem the pleasures of this life (34).

John Fisher, in his Good Friday sermon, used the same image of the crucifix as a book. This sermon, an extended meditation upon the Passion of Christ, befits the solemn celebration of Good Friday. Fisher compares the crucifix to a book as follows:

Thus who that list with a meeke harte, and a true fayth, to muse and to marvayle of this most wonderfull books (I say of the crucifixe) hee shall come to more fruitfull knowledge, then many other which dayly studie upon their common bookes (Cited in Lawler, 187-188).

Lawler refers to this fixing of the crucifix in the imagination as part of the "Cistercian mystical tradition," and refers it back to St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bernard (188-189). Francis would have recommended the crucifix as a book because he believed that Christ crucified was the only knowledge that a man really needed, because it would have implied the knowledge of Christ's love for him.

The crucifix represented love far more than it represented pain, and it was upon this love that men like Fisher and Southwell meditated. If we turn to the words of St. Francis de Sales in his book On the Love of God, published in 1616, we see expressed this connection between love and pain. We also see the strong Post Tridentine tendency towards paradox, the confusion of surface meanings under heated spiritual experience, which found its culmination in English in the works of Crashaw.

Thus both pain in love and love in pain are brought into being...Thus they put the soul in incredible turmoil and agony, and there results an ecstasy that is lovingly sorrowful and sorrowfully

loving. Hence when the great souls of St. Frances and St. Catherine received the stigmata, they felt matchless love amid all their pain and incomparable love. They tasted that joyous love of suffering for a loved one which their Savior experienced in a supreme degree on the tree of the cross (De Sales 248).

One of De Sales' favorite adjectives is "incomparable", because that is the true nature of the spiritual experience he is attempting to describe. This experience of love is unique; it cannot really be compared to anything else, and it begins in devotion to the cross, in reading the crucifix as one would study a book.

Southwell did not delight in pain for its own sake. If he took solace in it at all, it was only because he was able to imitate in his own way the sufferings of Christ or, as De Sales put it above, "that joyous love of suffering for a loved one". As Christ had willingly suffered for him, so Southwell would willingly suffer for Christ. It is important to note, however, that one of the few complaints he made at his trial was that he had been made to suffer beyond what could be called normal human endurance. Southwell described his tortures to his judges and they responded that such things were common among all nations. Southwell agreed that such things were done by others, but he indicated that there could be extremes in torture: "I

confess that other nations have the like, but when by torture nothing can be got, I wish there might be some measure therein, lest by extremity of pain a man be driven if it were possible to despair" (Devlin 310). It is not likely, therefore, that Southwell welcomed such pain, but he was able to endure it by meditating upon the crucifix and the pain that Christ had suffered for him. Devlin notes, in an interesting sidelight, that the torture of Southwell, suspension by the wrists in iron gauntlets for extended periods, was very similar to the torture of the crucifixion, and the effects on the body would have been much the same (Devlin 285). In all of his sufferings, Southwell found love, and it was all due to the love that Christ had shown for him. Southwell was aware that if one endured such pain willingly for any other reason, it might well be considered a form of insanity:

Let us but consider the last tragical pageant
of his Passion, wherein he won us and lost
himself; and mark the excessive love shewn
therein, which if any other than God had uttered,
it would have been deemed a senseless dotage
(Southwell 43-44).

Southwell's fourth consideration for finding comfort is the realization that suffering is more conformable to man's true condition on earth than is prosperity. Under no conditions can man's earthly status be considered as an end

in itself. "We are here in a place of exile, in a hospital of Lazars, in a channel of ordure, in a dungeon of misery, in a sepulchre of dead carcasses, finally in a vale of tears" (50-51). Given such a state of affairs as man's true condition, how could he expect not to suffer adversity and tribulation? Such an observation springs out of the late medieval notion of contemptus mundi, but even this needs to be seen in context, with the positive elements which were at its base. The world must not be despised for its own sake, but because there is a better world beyond, and the enjoyment of this world interferes with the attainment of the better world beyond. The human soul, Southwell says, is "created to live with angels, to enjoy the love and company of an eternal spouse, to be a citizen of heaven, to inherit a kingdom and triumph in royal dignity" (53). It is to the next world that all one's efforts must be directed. This world is one of change and decay; the next world is one of incomparable beauty and permanence. "Since all things here bend to decay and are tainted with death's consumption, the saints, like dying and passing persons, lived in mourning and a continual farewell, awaiting always their departure from these earthly solaces" (59). The pleasures of this life are always lacking in fullness and reality. The sunshine of prosperity in this life cannot be compared to the smallest ray of glory in the next:

For in truth, the contentments of this life have true misery, feigned felicity, assured sorrow, doubtful delights, rough storms, timorous rest, solace full of sadness, and hope full of sadness, and hope full of hazard. They are like fair weather in winter, nothing durable; like a calm in the sea, always uncertain; like the steadiness of the moon, that is ever changing (62).

Southwell's fifth consolation for those enduring tribulation is the consideration that whatever one has to endure in this life, it is very little in comparison to what one should be made to suffer for his sins. He takes a panoramic view of the sufferings of mankind over the centuries. He considers the "miseries of our bodies, such as hunger, thirst, nakedness, deformity, sickness, and mortality;" he looks at all the "troubles of our mind, such as fantasies, fears, perplexities, anguish and divers imperfections;" he notes the "general scourges of plagues, war, a thousand hazards and calamities;" and he comments that all of these are "incident to this life" and all are the result of the one sin of Adam and Eve. If there is so much punishment due to one sin, how much more do we deserve who have committed innumerable sins? The rest of the chapter is a sad recitation of the ills attendant upon human life throughout history, ending with a consideration of the final

ill of human sin and the existence of hell. Southwell concludes that our personal sufferings are small in comparison to what we have merited.

In the sixth chapter, Southwell comes to the central part of his discourse, which is ultimately a call to, and a justification of, martyrdom in the cause of the Catholic faith. He calls it "the principal drift of this my discourse" (90). He sets the present cause of tribulation in what he believes to be its clear outlines. It is the "only true and Catholic religion" versus "erroneous and blasphemous heresy" (90). He sets the present troubles in the context of the early Church which endured persecution under the Roman emperors, citing the early Fathers of the Church in his behalf:

We defend that Church which is avouched by all antiquity, confirmed by the blood of infinite martyrs, gainsaid by the heretics of all ages, and most undoubtedly approved by all testimonies. We defend the Church of Rome...(90).

He refers to Luther's "novelties" (95), the "new doctrine" which is "unheard of before or condemned in other heresies" (92). Southwell opposes to the heretics that belief approved by "Councils, Universities, and Catholic Doctors" which has "remained impregnable" (92). To die in such a cause is to die a worthy death: "We should think our limbs happily lost, our blood blessedly bestowed and our lives

most honourably spent in this so noble and important a business" (100). He ends the chapter with the common Catholic indictment of Protestantism as not only a heresy, but a belief which is conducive to immorality, since it discounts the importance of works:

Let also the records of assizes and sessions be searched and let it be shewn how many hundred Protestants are yearly executed for felonies, murders, rapes, extortions, forgeries and such like crimes, and how few recusants have been ever in so many years attached justly with such like offences (109).

The seventh consideration for comfort is the realization that life is a warfare between the forces of good and evil and that the cause of suffering in England is a good one. No one with pretensions to being a Christian can avoid the struggle: "Christianity is a warfare, and Christians spiritual soldiers; their conflicts continual, though their enemies be divers" (111). Christians are offered two choices, which Southwell refers to as "keys":

We are offered two keys, the one of gold set with diamonds, rubies and pearls, curiously wrought, and hanged in a chain of a great price; the other of old rusty iron, unhandsome and shapeless to behold and tied in a rotten cord. Yet we know that the rusty key openeth the door to infinite

treasure, the other to a sink of corruption and a dungeon of despair (113).

The key to infinite riches is rusty because its use requires that we endure considerable unpleasantness in life, including persecution. Southwell may also be making a comment on the small numbers to be saved, and therefore the key, not used very much, is rusty.

The eighth cause for comfort that Southwell proposes is that imprisonment for the one true religion is the only true freedom. In a paradoxical way, Southwell demonstrates that the world itself is a prison and our only escape from it is through spiritual means. This, of course, is very similar to the argument that Thomas More made earlier in his prison writings. The world is the true prison, and imprisonment in the lesser prison of stone can actually be a deliverance from the greater prison of the world:

Greater darkness hath the world which inveigleth
and blindeth not only the eyes but the hearts of
men. Heavier chains and shackles doth the world
lay on us which do fetter and entangle our very
souls. Far worse ordure and stench doth the world
breathe out--I mean ribaldry, carnality and all
kind of brutish behaviour. Finally, more pri-
soners and guilty persons hath the world, not to
be judged by the umpireship of any earthly magis-
trate, but by the censure and verdict of Almighty

God. Happy therefore are you, if you can reckon yourselves translated out of prison into a place of preservation (120).

Southwell calls those who remain behind in the world "the captives of the world" (128). They are in no better condition than those enduring actual captivity. In fact, imprisonment can be a place of preparation for the spiritual warfare that every Christian must confront, a school to learn about the battle: "Considering these things let us take our prison as a place of preparation and as a private school of exercise to train and instruct us for public, serious and most sharp affrays" (130). In a final paradox, Southwell instructs those suffering imprisonment for the faith that their captivity is really their only true freedom: "This captivity is our principal freedom, and the prisons are ports where God harboureth us here, and from whence he conveyeth us unto the shore of eternal felicity" (129) .

Only those who have placed their hopes in this world need have fear of death. Southwell next proposes that those who are good do not find death to be fearful: "This world is the kingdom of Satan; what servant of God can love to live in it? It is a place of banishment, and who is so unnatural as not willingly to forsake it?" (133). Southwell uses a series of ship images to get across his point. We are all like mariners on a dangerous voyage. There are billows and

rocks and storms; who can be reluctant to reach a safe shore? Our sailing on this voyage is inevitable; we have no choice about sailing. Using another paradox, Southwell points out that it is only by the constant meditation upon death that we become comfortable with it. Death is to be feared only by those who do not think about it: "If anything makes death tedious, it is the want of consideration of it" (140). Like Fisher and More before him, Southwell advocates the constant remembrance of death. By meditating upon our end we learn to accept it. "If therefore we wish to be out of all fear of death, let us continually remember it" (140).

The tenth consideration is similar to the one which preceded it. He indicates that we have no choice about death, and since we all must die, then death in a good cause is the best way to die: "The very necessity of death should make us not unwilling to die, when experience sheweth us mortal. Live well and die well, we may: but live long and not die, we cannot" (151). The only real choice we have is to die well. In a reference to the Earl of Arundel, as well as other Catholics who were facing death, and quite possibly even himself, Southwell writes that if "we be taken away in the flower of our age, how could it be better bestowed than on him that gave it?" (152). Again he uses one of his favorite ship images to illustrate the idea of dying young: "And all our loss therein is concluded in this, that being passengers upon this worldly sea, we had a stronger gale to

waft us sooner over to our desired port" (152). He concludes this chapter with a call to martyrdom, which is the central theme of the book:

So let them draw us upon hurdles, hang us, unbowel us alive, mangle us, boil us and set our quarters upon their gates to be meat for the birds of the air, as they used to handle rebels. We will answer them, as the Christians of former persecutions have done: Such is the manner of our victory, such our conquering garment, in such chariots do we triumph (156).

Such then is the central message of Southwell's Christianity. Glory is to be found, not in victory, but in defeat. Honor is to be found, not in a serene death, but in a shameful one. The end to be sought is heavenly glory and not earthly glory. In his eleventh chapter, he points out that "this martyrdom doth with our soul, bringing it forth with such perfection that it is straight enabled to have the perfect sight and love of God (wherein consisteth our bliss and happiness), without any delay of further growth or sufficiency" (165). Martyrdom benefits not only the individual soul but the entire Church. It was on the blood of martyrs that the early Church was built, as Southwell points out:

But if we consider, moreover, how beneficial martyrdom is to the Church, and how important a

means to advance God's glory, no true member of Christ, nor true child of the Catholic Church, can be so unnatural as not to rejoice that he hath so good an occasion to discharge his duty to them both and in such an acceptable manner (168).

Shedding one's blood speaks louder than living a holy life, than working miracles, than saying many words in the conversion of souls to the Church (182). Southwell writes of the power that is contained even in the relics of martyrs: "What hath been wrought by any martyr in his life, yea and sometimes of greater force; whether it were raising of the dead, restoring of the lame, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or speech to the dumb or what other miracle soever?" (193).

In his twelfth chapter, Southwell takes issue with the schismatics, those who have forsaken the Catholic Church to join the established Church. He has a certain sympathy for those who have yielded after a long struggle, but not for those who yielded without a fight. He is talking of those who attended Protestant services because of the heavy fines imposed on them if they did not:

Many of them yielding before the battle and foiled before they fought, have not left themselves even the excuse of being able to say that they went to church unwillingly. They offer themselves voluntarily, they run wittingly to their own ruin

and seem rather to embrace sin as a desirable thing than to yield to an occasion that they would fain have eschewed (195).

Many of these claimed that they were being loyal to the Queen by attending such services. But in a reversal, Southwell points out that being loyal to their earthly Queen, they are being disloyal to their true queen, the Catholic Church (197). Southwell claims that most of the people have done so out of a love for money, which is, he adds, a greater prison than stone walls (203).

Southwell ends his book with a description of the joys of Heaven and a call for perseverance. The joys of Heaven are beyond human description, so he is reduced to using earthly examples:

...let this for the glory of the place suffice:
that all the ornaments, delights and inventions
that either nature hath bred, art devised or man
imagined shall there meet to the furniture of
these rooms; and whatsoever hath been, is or shall
be of rare beauty to set forth anything shall
there be present; and all this in a thousandfold
more delicious and exquisite than ever hath been
seen or conceived in this world (220).

Martyrdom is a small price to pay for such infinite riches, and Southwell encourages his readers to remain firm. He points out that the time in which they live, a time of

persecution, is actually a glorious era because it affords one the opportunity to die in a glorious cause: "The estate of the persecuted is honourable in God's Church, imprisonment glorious, martyrdom precious in itself, profitable to the Church and beneficial to the sufferers, your final reward ample and great" (247). Thus he ends on a positive note. By setting events in an eternal perspective, he reverses the usual order of values. The times of persecution are not to be lamented, but to be embraced and treasured. The shameful end is to be sought because it is not really the end, but the beginning.

Notes

1 See Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Tests with English Translations, by H.J. Schroeder, O.P. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1941.

2 See Richard Verstegan in the Bibliography for the mentioned text.

3 This was one of Topcliffe's favorite taunts of Southwell, along with "Christ's fellow." Evidently it was meant to reduce the stature of Southwell and invalidate any of his arguments. See Devlin, p. 308.

Chapter Five

Benedict Canfield and The Christian Knight

Benedict Canfield, born as William Fitch in 1562 in Essex, was raised in the Reformed Religion.¹ There is the possibility that he attended Cambridge, but no one is sure he is the William Fitch mentioned in the matriculation register at Pembroke College (Gullick 40). However, it is known that he studied law at the Inns of Court, spending a total of seven years as a student at the Middle Temple (Emery 13). The formative years he spent at the Middle Temple probably constituted the pivotal point of his life. He not only studied law there, but he experienced both the pleasures and drawbacks of London life. It was during this period that he gravitated towards a religious solution to the problems of his life. The Inns at this time were not simply law schools, but also "finishing schools" where young men learned the social graces necessary to be considered gentlemen. "Intellectual life at the Inns was not confined to the study of the law. The Inns aspired to produce gentlemen who, besides a training in the law, had a mastery of the liberal arts and graceful social accomplishments..." (Emery 13). Such accomplishments would have included dancing, singing, and fencing. According to Philip

Finklepearl, the Inns of Court were the literary center of England and contained "the largest single group of literate and cultured men in London" (Cited in Emery 13). Many young poets learned the craft of poetry there, circulating their poems among the other students. Sir John Davies and John Donne come to mind as student-poets at the Inns. There were a great number of distractions to be sampled and enjoyed in the surrounding city, and Canfield tells us about some of these in a confession he wrote later upon admission to the Capuchin Order in France:

I lived soe perillouslie, in a place soe full of dangerous snares: with ryme I spent in feeding my fancye with the vanities of this place, and tooke my delight in the ordinary pastimes of that place: Alas how often have I beaten the streetes in idle walking? how often have I runne to plaies and comedies? how many an idle turne have I made in Saint Pauls church, now so prophaned? how often have I run to dauncing and fencing Schooles? if I spent any time better then other, it was when in the Inne of the middle Temple, I read for fashion some booke of the common lawe... (Brousse 16-17).²

Benedict's view of his student days is no doubt shaped by the religious experience that he later had. He finally sought the salvation of his soul in the ascetic life, and it

was as an ascetic he that looked back on his youth, just as Augustine did in his Confessions some thousand years before. Augustine described similar experiences in Carthage and reacted with similar disgust. It is perhaps difficult for the reader to react so negatively to the description that Canfield provides of his student days; in fact, some readers might find it the most interesting part of the book and fail to see Canfield's student days as fraught with such danger and peril. However, Canfield saw it as a time bordering on absolute emptiness, a time wrapped in darkness. "I have now a horror of the darkenes wherein I was, and more of the darke Abyesse, whither I was going..." (Brousse 18).

There are several things to keep in mind in assessing Canfield's later view of his earlier life. One is that a sensitive and religious nature such as his could never have been fed or sustained by the fashionable cynicism prevalent in the society of the Inns. Donne's early satires are some indication of this cynicism. Secondly, Canfield may very well have slid down the path of dissipation far enough to frighten him:

He also maintains that he led a riotous and dissipated life. The social life in England at this time seems to have been very corrupt. William himself mentions the lack of business morality, the land-grabbing of the upper classes, the corruption of justice, the almost universal habit of

swearing, and the lack of respect for Sunday and religion generally. He does not mention the almost universal drunkenness, the general sexual immorality, and the licentiousness of the theater (Gullick 41).

No matter how far down Canfield may have gone, he went far enough to approach what he later called the "Abyss". This was one of the controlling experiences in his later conversion.

There were also positive features at the Inns of Court which would also prove decisive in Canfield's later conversion. The Inns were one of the centers of Catholic thought and activity in England:

Whatever else Benet accomplished at the Inns of Court, it was there that he discovered "true religion". Benet probably met Catholics for the first time at the Inns. The Inns were considered a haven for Catholics; they were the site of much clandestine Catholic activity, and in order to combat this with a strong antidote, the authorities appointed Puritan preachers. The famous preaching disputes between the Puritan, Walter Travers, and Richard Hooker took place at the Inns while Benet studied there. At the Inns Benet was exposed to the religious controversies of the day (Emery 13-14).

While he was on a short vacation in the country, Canfield picked up and read Robert Persons Christian Directory, in the sanitized version of Bunney.³ It was this book, more than any other, which precipitated his conversion to the Catholic religion.⁴

It is an interesting comment on the times that when Benedict wanted to be received into the Catholic Church, he went to prison to find a priest. Going to Newgate Prison in 1585, Canfield found Robert Darbyshire, a priest-prisoner who had been educated at the English seminary in Rome. Darbyshire received Canfield into the Church (Gullick 51), and from there Canfield went to France where he could practice his new religion in freedom. His first reaction to the Catholic Church in France was a favorable one. Like Crashaw in the next century, Canfield seemed to have a need for the ritual, ceremony, and color of the Catholic services, the very things the Reformers rejected. Canfield entered the Capuchin Order and became a monk. Benedict became Father Benedict and, like the others discussed here, developed a particular devotion to the Passion of Christ. According to his early biographer:

so this blessed Father did so bende the force of his spirit to God by the meditation of the cruelty of the passion, that three years before he died, hee reposed not one hour and a halfe, of foure and twentie when hee felt not himselfe

drawen by divine tracts with such effect of union and transformation unto Jesus Christ crucified, according to that whiche he wrote there on in his thirde parte of the will of God, in his treatie of the passion that it left impressions in him of the paines of our Saviour, and so violent they were that his body and soule did feelee day and night the great and inward dolours caused thereby. He suffered in his body, and for that which concerneth the inferiour powers of the soule, and all that can be suffered, but the superiour part of the reason did take pleasure thereby, & receaved greate contentment which was an infallible argument, that such attractions are truly from God...(Brousse 90-91).

Benedict apparently derived many benefits from such practices. His biographer speaks of the pleasure that Benedict received, especially in the "superiour part of the reason." Such pleasures again call into play the distinction that the Platonists drew between physical pleasures and spiritual pleasures, that the spiritual was higher than the physical and therefore the corresponding pleasures would have been greater.⁵ Benedict therefore seems to have been well rewarded for his ascetic practices and devotion to the Passion, although this would not have been the object of his devotional practices. He addressed his autobiography to God,

just as Augustine had done before him, and he remarked upon the positive aspects of the austerities he performed:

O my sweetenes, thou has taught mee to drawe
honnie out of the rock of penance, and oile out of
a moste harde flint stone, to wit, out of a most
straight rule, and in all this, o Lord thou hast
been my only guide...(Brousse 64).

Benedict found peace and consolation in the rule of the
Capuchin Order:

And when I consider the excessive consola-
tions manifested to mee, the merveilous revela-
tions, extraordinary visions and ravishments,
advising thy liberalitie, I knowe certainly that
there is none like unto thee among the Gods, nor
according to thy workes...

(Brousse 60).

As he was received into the Capuchin Order, Benedict
"thought himselfe in Paradise" (Brousse 75).

In 1599, Benedict returned to England as a missionary.
His motives for doing so were rather simple, although there
is some question as to whether he was actively seeking
martyrdom. He was following the example of the founder of
his order, St. Francis, who went to the Holy Land to con-
vert the infidels. So Benedict went to England to convert
infidels and help restore heretics to the true faith. Emery
believes that Benedict was seeking "the final perfection of

the spiritual life, martyrdom" (19). His missionary career was short-lived. Showing perhaps a remarkable naivety, he landed in England without contacts, without a destination, and wearing his Capuchin habit under his outer clothes. He stopped at a building shortly after he had landed, which he took for an inn, but which turned out to be a jail, and the warders arrested him. He was sent to London for interrogation, then was transferred to Wisbech Castle where he spent the remainder of his time in England.

While in Wisbech, Benedict maintained the practice and discipline of the Capuchin Order. He passed his ample leisure time discussing religion with his captors and writing an allegory he entitled Le Chevalier Chretien. There was an English version published in 1619 entitled The Christian Knight which, according to the title page, was compiled by a Sir William Wiseman. The Wisemans were cousins to Canfield on his mother's side, and it is known that they were a recusant family. In fact, one of the Wiseman brothers became a Jesuit priest. William Wiseman was himself imprisoned in the Tower for aiding a Jesuit missionary. It is this William Wiseman who is no doubt the author or translator of The Christian Knight. Whether The Christian Knight is a translation of an earlier manuscript version of Le Chevalier Chretien, or a book written by Wiseman under the inspiration of Canfield's work, is not known. It is possible, too, that Canfield wrote a shorter, abridged version

of Le Chevalier Chretien in English and that this version, if it existed, was used by Wiseman in compiling his own book. However, both the Dictionary of National Biography and the Short Title Catalog attribute the work to Canfield. Regardless of the exact genealogy of The Christian Knight, the book presents an admirable expression of some key ideas for understanding the recusant effort in England. For one thing, there is the very title itself, expressing the belief that the missionary effort in England, as well as other parts of the globe, was quasi-military, a translation of the notion of knighthood from the earthly sphere to the spiritual sphere. The notion of spiritual knighthood provided inspiration to the missionaries who came to England to minister to Catholics and possibly convert the heretics back to the old religion. The other idea found in The Christian Knight is an expression of the last of the Four Last Things, or Heaven. For it is ultimately to the idea of Heaven that one must look for the motivation of the Catholic martyrs.

We have already seen how Ignatius Loyola and St Francis of Assisi developed certain notions of Christian knighthood and spiritual chivalry in their lives and works. Francis passed his youth dreaming of being a knight, and through his conversion these dreams were spiritualized; Francis became a knight of Christ (La Bedoyere 64). Francis saw his mission as a form of spiritual warfare, much in the terms St. Paul used when he suggested that the Christian put on the armor

of Christ. Francis prepared himself to "fight for his cause, for his Master, Jesus Christ, and his fair lady, Poverty" (La Bedoyere 64). Ignatius performed the knightly vigil at Montserrat before embarking on his life's work. The thirteenth century was the high water mark of crusading knighthood and chivalry (Gies 103); it began to decline as an institution after that time. Yet the notion of chivalry, in a spiritualized form, lived on to influence the lives of men such as Ignatius and Francis, and also the Catholic missionaries who came to England to convert and restore, much like the early crusaders had gone to the Holy Land to restore it to Christ. It is significant in this regard that both Ignatius and Frances had planned to go to the Holy Land either to convert the pagans or to die as martyrs in the attempt. The idea of the spiritual crusade was thus born in the Middle Ages but carried over into the Renaissance. Huizinga sees the origin of knighthood in the pagan past and its Christianization resulting from the feudalism of the Middle Ages (85). If this is true, then knighthood itself was a spiritualization of pagan ideals. Just so was the idea of Christian knighthood a further spiritualization of the medieval idea of knighthood. The process began with successful completion of the First Crusade, when orders of knights were established in the Holy Land to protect pilgrims. Such orders as the Templars and the Hospitalers combined the ideal of the warrior knight with the monastic

life. The Templars originally called themselves the "poor knights of Christ" (Barber 227). This Order of the Temple was founded in 1119 by two knights, Hugues de Paynes and Geoffrey de St. Omer, who "swore poverty, chastity, and obedience before the patriarch of Jerusalem and announced their mission of protecting and aiding pilgrims" (Gies 108). Interestingly enough, the Church commissioned Bernard of Clairvaux to draw up a rule for the new order, which he did based on the Cistercian Rule (Gies 108). In the 1130's, Bernard wrote a tract at the request of one of the founders of the new order, Hugues de Paynes, and called it In Praise of the New Chivalry (Gies 108). In this movement, inspired by both the ideals of the warrior knight and the monk, the ideal of the Christian knight is forming.

Christian knighthood was made the official policy of the Church by Gregory VII, who decreed that the knight owed his main loyalty to the Church, and that this spiritual loyalty surpassed his loyalty to a temporal prince:

The interests of the Church took precedence over all others, according to Gregory. The role of the laity, and of the knights in particular, was to serve those interests, both in secular politics and elsewhere. In the case of conflict, a knight's loyalty to the Church superseded his loyalty to his lord and even canceled his oath. Cleverly adopting feudal vocabulary, Gregory

declared that knights were "the vassals of St. Peter" (Gies 32).

Originally the knight was a warrior for a certain lord, to whom he would swear loyalty in return for land. The land now offered to the spiritual knight was not earthly land, but spiritual land. The knights motivated by Pope Gregory were to be soldiers of Christ, and their loyalty was to be to him.

The trappings of knighthood were carried into the sixteenth century. The existence of knighthood was in danger due to the centralization of power in the monarchy, which led to the sale of the office and the dilution of the ideal, but also due to the invention of gunpowder and other modern weaponry, and the simple interest in new ideals and the abandonment of the old. Yet the idea of knighthood and chivalry lingered as an ideal throughout the century, as can be seen in Edmund Spenser's poem in which the Red Cross Knight has achieved an allegorical existence representing the Christian's path to holiness.

Under the impetus of the Troubadours, knights had been seen as in the service of some great lady, for whom he fought and whose beauty and perfection he maintained. This idea was also spiritualized in the service of the Christian knight. St. Francis served the Lady Poverty. The Red Cross Knight served the Lady Una, who stands for true reli-

gion. Many of the recusants served the Virgin Mary, who figures prominently in their writings.

Knighthood in the Middle Ages had been associated with the nobility. Only those of noble blood could be knighted, at least this was the ideal. In the beginning, anyone who had the requisite prowess in arms could achieve the status of knighthood, although it was later reserved for those who had the necessary social status. It "was acknowledged at a very early date that it was not advisable to knight men of low birth, and legal restrictions appear in Germany and Sicily in the twelfth century" (Barber 30). This association of knighthood with the well-born is possibly one of the reasons for Southwell's defense of the Jesuits in England, insofar as he insisted they were gentlemen.

Ramon Lull in the late thirteenth century wrote a book about chivalry, and he described the education and dubbing of a knight. The book begins with a description of an old knight, one who had passed the prime of his years and had gone into the forest seeking a "heremytage", for "nature faylled in hym by age, and hadde no power ne vertu to use armes as he was woned to do" (Lull 4). Like so many of the recusants in the English prisons, the knight begins to meditate on death and judgement. "The same knyght thynkyng on the dethe, remembryth the departynge fro this world into that other, & also thought of the ryght redoubtable sentence of oure Lorde in which hym behoved to come to the day of

Jugement" (4-5). A young squire stumbles accidentally upon the old knight and asks him to teach him about knighthood and chivalry. The old knight has a book about true knighthood in his hand, and this he gives to the squire. Then he explains the duties of the knight, which are mainly moral in nature. The knight is to be a governor, one who attempts to reestablish the moral order of the world, to implement that original justice which had been lost in the Garden of Eden when man fell into sin. Not only is the knight to seek justice and to defend the weak, but he is to defend the Catholic faith:

The offyce of a knyght is to mayntene and defende the holy feyth catholyque, by the whiche god the fader sente his sone in to the world to take flesshe humayne in the gloryous vyrgyn oure Lady saynte Mary, and for to honoure and multypie the feyth, suffryd in this world many travaylles, despytes and anguysshous deth (24).

We can clearly see this motivation operating in the Catholic missionaries in England. It was this ideal that was shared by both Southwell and Canfield. Just as the early knights had displayed their prowess and the worthiness of their cause by tournaments and jousting, so the missionaries always stood ready to dispute with their Protestant jailers about the truth of the Catholic faith. Just as the knight had to be willing to risk death for the nobility of his

cause, the missionary also was quite willing to endure death for his own.

Lull says further that the knight is to defend justice and defend the weak:

The offyce of Knyght is to mayntene & deffende
wymmen, wydowes & orphanes, and men dyseased and
not puyssaunt ne stronge; for lyke as customme and
reason is that the grettest and most myghty helpe
the feble and lesse...(30).

This was also the motivation of the Catholic missionaries to England. For they saw English Catholics as weak when opposed to the coercive power of the state. They also saw English Catholics as "orphanes" because they had been deprived of their mother, the Church. Since they believed that Christ had established the Catholic Church and the seven sacraments, to deprive men of these things so necessary for their salvation was to commit an act of injustice. It was to right this act of injustice, and to defend and minister to the orphans of the Church, that the missionaries came to England. Canfield titled his work The Christian Knight; it was in this context that he saw the missionary effort in England.

Benedict Canfield displays both the Isocratic (loose open) and the Ciceronian (balanced and ornate) styles in his writing. The following is an example of his balanced style

in which he relies on antithesis in paired clauses to achieve his efforts:

There is no satiety is this life, no perfect filling, or satucity here; it must be in heaven; it is in the vision of God, not in fruition of creatures; we are here by in expectation, there in possession; here in hope and promise, there in deede and performance, here in fight, there in victory; here like hunters, and souldiers, there we divide the spoils...We are all souldiers in the magno campo, or great battle of the world; Wee are hunts-men in this wilde forrest, or chace of beasts, and sauages, our owne appetites, and inordinate desires; which sometimes wee kill, and sometimes they escape our hands (20).

Canfield relies on the paired antithesis to achieve an oratorical effect, but he also carries the doublets within the clauses in a manner similar to Fisher. For example, in the last sentence, he writes "in this wilde forrest, or chace of beasts," and "our owne appetites, and inordinate desires." The practice of using doublets in one of the indications of the aureate or Ciceronian approach (Mueller 174). Canfield can also use the loose, open sentence, which consists of a series of clauses grouped about a central notion, and in this approach he resembles More. Consider the following quotation:

The heaven we speake of was revealed to St. John in forme of a city, twelve thousand furlongs in length, as many in breathe, and as many in height, all the twelve gates of it, were entire pearle, the streets paved with gold, and the walls of the same pure golde, and smooth like christall: and the botome whereof twelve are named. It had no temple, for the temple was God himselfe. He sawe a River also of living water, cleere as christall, springing out of the seate of God, and the lambe. This, and a great deal more he sawe in spirit; and is not this comprehensible?

This passage is a series of clauses grouped about the central idea of a vision of heaven. Like More, Canfield uses a simple vocabulary, though more elevated in content, as his vision was focused on heaven, while More's was focused on earth.

The Christian Knight consists of a series of orations by two Frenchmen, "the one a Souldier, the other a Civilian, against the vices of their times and country." The one Frenchman was the "Duke de Mercury, a right noble, and valerious Captaine, late lieftenant generall to the Emperour, against the Turk in Hungarie" and the other is the chaplain to the Duke. The author tells us that he will "speake English to the English" (Canfield 1). The work consists of two main speeches or "orations", the one showing

the reader how to get to Heaven and the other "showing us our happines when we come there". It is his description of Heaven which is of most interest for the present discussion, for it is in the idea of Heaven that is found the main motivation of the English recusant martyrs. Such men as Canfield simply cannot be explained without this strong conviction that a better place awaited them for their efforts. It was the idea of Heaven that filled Canfield's thoughts while he was in prison in Wisbech, awaiting what he thought was certain execution.

The chaplain gives two orations in The Christian Knight. The first oration concerns the panis viatorum, or the bread of travelers. He sees the Christian soul on this earth as a traveler, one proceeding to a heavenly destination. He says that the earthly traveler only possesses two sorts of goods. The first good is time, and the second is the physical endowment of his mind and body:

...all that a man hath or can possesse in this world, may be drawne to two heads: the one is time, which how precious it is I neede not tell, but if it were ten times more, it were all too little to spend in our way to heaven. The other is our goods (that is to say) all we have, whether they be of minde, as reason, witte, will, memory, learning, and such like; or of body, health, strength, acti-

vity, prowess, eloquence, or of outward fortunes,
as riches, honour, pleasures, and the like...(3).

These goods the author refers to as "silver". What is aimed at, though, is not silver but gold. All that we possess on earth is silver, "as in heaven all is gold" (3).

Just as physical food is necessary to maintain our physical lives on this earth, so spiritual food is necessary to maintain our spiritual lives. This spiritual food is what Canfield refers to as panis viatorum. There are three elements to this bread of travelers:

...the one is the word of God. The second all manners of vertues, and good habits in our soules. The third is Sacraments; all which may bee rightly called bread, and so sometimes in Holy Scripture....The word of God feedes us with instructions: Vertues feed us with imitations: Sacraments feede us with grace and consolation (4-6).

The whole point that Canfield makes is that the panis viatorum does not satisfy the soul. Even the saints must remain in a state of non-satisfaction:

I confesse, and let this be our ground, that there is no absolute content in this life, all our content, even a Saints content upon earth; is but enigmat, or like the sunne in a cloude upon a gloomy day....there is no satiety in this life, no perfect filling....it must be in heaven, not here;

it is in the vision of God, not in fruition of creatures; we are here but in expectation, there in possession; here in hope, and promise, there in deede and performance; here in fight, there in victory...(20).

Canfield changes his metaphors in this section. The bread of travelers is actually the bread of warriors, or of knights. We are found here on this earth in a state of war. "We are all souldiers in this magno campo, or great battle of the world" (20). The enemies that we must fight are "our owne appetites, and inordinate desires" (20). It is the thought of Heaven which must provide us with comfort. It is the hope of Heaven which must sustain us, "a little hope...instead of a possession, a fervent thought now and then instead of a present imbrace" (20). This hope and expectation is "sweete to us, untill we come home at night, that is (to say) the end of our life" (21). And at the end of our lives, we shall arrive at our "heavenly dwelling; where we shall have indeede, not only our true Satis, but Satis supery, and shall have no end of enough" (21).

It is the living in this middle state, poised between struggle and conflict and the hope of future concord, that moves Canfield to find comfort in the typical Renaissance theme of "discordia concors":

See heere a notable Sympathy in an Antithesis, a concord as it were in a holy discord, a fainting

and a leaping both at one time, defection and exultation both at a breath, a swoounding and reviving all in a verse, all at an instant. So as, let our discomfort bee never so great, beeing for God and in a longing for him: such discomfort can be no true discomfort, that is so full of comfort; not true dulnesse or heavinesse, that is so quick with child of so great hopes, or of so hopefull an inheritance (21).

The very state of being poised between two realities is itself a source of comfort. Consolation is taken from the fact that the very dissatisfaction on this earth is a promise of a future state of satisfaction. Thus pain itself is a promise of future relief:

This the comforts of comforts, and well head of true content, or highest toppe of our Satis in this life. What life can bee in sorrow, that is indowed with this? and they that have this, whatsoever they bee, or have beene, may joy and exult at all times. Let miseries come like hayle upon us, yet can we not bee unhappy, as long as we have this. Let our estate for life bee what it will be, so we be sure of our inheritance: our perpetuall hope of this, and our will still concurring with our hope, is it that nourisheth so, as, wee can aske no more in this life, wheresoever wee become; in paine or

pleasure, among friends or enemies, in sleepe or awake, in travell or at rest, in plenty or penury, peace or warre, in businesse or at quiet, still our Satis attends us, and wee carry content where wee goe, in triumph about us (22).

The second oration of the chaplain concerns the panis angelorum, or the "bread of angels". Just as the panis angelorum was the bread of travelers, which was mainly the expectation of Heaven, so the panis angelorum is the attainment and enjoyment of Heaven. Canfield is at some difficulty in describing it because, as he says, no man living has ever enjoyed it in its fullness:

Our reward in heaven (sure) is admirably great: but what it is, or in what fashion, that we may say it is these and there, no man can deliver (G3).

In attempting to deliver some notion of what Heaven is like, Canfield uses the Thomistic method of analogy. It is appropriate that he does so, for he is attempting to solve the same kind of problem that Thomas was attempting to solve. Pseudo-Dionysius had proposed a negative theology, which states that God is so far above man that man cannot entertain any adequate notion of Him. Anything that is said about God, any quality that is attributed to Him, is false, because God exists on an entirely different plain, exists in an entirely different way than man exists. Therefore to say that God is good is false, because in saying that God is good, man is

using human terminology which simply does not apply to God. One is thus reduced to saying that God is not-good. But such negative theology is difficult for man to grasp, and only a few hardy souls have been able to pursue it to its ultimate limit, that God is no-thing and must be approached with an entirely empty mind. The average human mind must always grapple with images, with what it knows, and with the categories of thought with which it is familiar. Thus Thomas taught about God through analogy. When we say that God is good, we do not mean in a human sense, but in a sense which is analogous to human goodness. This method preserves human categories, but projects them to an entirely different plain. It gives man a method to approach divinity using that with which he is familiar, but at the same time preserving the total otherness of God.

Canfield proceeds by analogy then to describe what Heaven is like, fully conscious that he is doing so. He says that we cannot have "apprehensions of heavens delights, but by such similes, and resemblances, as we can make by visible things; by which we have a ghesse, or estimate at the greatnesse we speake of, and yet come short of it by infinite degrees" (4). If he had to choose one word to describe Heaven, he says that he would choose "Incomprehensibility": "For we must know for a certainety, that the greatnesse of our reward, that is to say, of heaven, is incomprehensible of any mortall understanding" (4). Canfield then asks a ques-

tion, "But why so?" (4). There have been many saints and martyrs who have recorded a foretaste of Heaven and have described their states of mind while they were in a trance or a state of ecstasy. Canfield wonders aloud why we cannot know about Heaven, for "doe we not rade of some that have seene heaven, or paradise in a traunce, or extasie, and coming to themselves againe, have told what they sawe there?" (4). He then repeats some of the common images that such visionaries have recorded in their attempts to portray what they saw. Canfield talks about "delicate green meddowes with silver streams and golden sands in the bottome running through the midst of them; the bankes beset with violets, and primroses, that never partch with heate, nor perish with treading on; the weather temperate, alwayes Aprill with them" (4). This perhaps is the best that the human mind can do in describing Heaven, yet it is not enough. Canfield proceeds with his rhetorical question: "Is not this comprehensible?" That is, can we not conceive of Heaven in all these streams, banks, flowers, and mild temperatures? Can we not take those things most pleasant to our senses here on earth and catapult them imaginatively into some greater dimension and thus conceive of Heaven? The answer to Canfield is obviously no.

Canfield also indicates that in Heaven we shall "behold the humanity of Christ and his blessed mother the glorious Virgin, whom to see in the flesh, wee could travell the world round, if they were living; such comfort we would find of

it." And again he asks: "Is not this comprehensible?" (5). He repeats the description that John gave of the heavenly city, a city of gold and diamonds, with God himself as the Temple. And he asks if that is not comprehensible? He then draws the contrast between the bread of travelers and the bread of angels, and he indicates that the essence of the bread of angels is found not in "faith" but in "reward" (4). He indicates also that there will be the full use of the body in Heaven, that we shall have our senses active, that they shall be "in greater use and perfection" (6). Our sense of taste will be pleased with that which is most suitable to it. "And if we could make a peece of bread to taste in our mouth of what we list, like a peare, or a pearmaine, a cherry, a plumbe, or a peece of marmalet, wee would thinke it an excellent thing, Behold, our Angels bread tastes of God; and in God is every good taste" (6). Again he asks: "Is not all this also comprehensible? How is it then that we say, heaven is incomprehensible?" (6).

Everything Canfield has so far said about Heaven is understandable, at least to some extent, in terms of human experience. Hence his repeated rhetorical question that asks: "Is not this comprehensible?" He finds that he must make good his earlier statement that Heaven is incomprehensible. And to do this he turns to what "they that bee learned call Theologiam negativum." All that we can say of Heaven is not true:

For our bodies it is cleere, wee shall be bright, quicke, nimble, subtill, full of noble perfections, such as we can ask no more. But for the things without us, how wee shall finde them no man can justly say. No said light as we apprehend, no such mirth or feasting, no pearle or pretious gemes there; no palace of pleasure with Bricks or pavements of gold, no such odours for the smell, or dainty notes to our eare; or gustfull things to our pallat, as we have them here (7).

These are the positive things, and yet he cannot say they are in Heaven for these things can only be understood through human experience, and human experience is totally inadequate for grasping the true nature of Heaven.

Then there are negative statements that one can make about Heaven, or statements concerning the things that will not be found in Heaven:

But on the contrary; if we say what is not there, that is evill and troublesome heere: all that we may boldly say to be literally true. No affliction there, no feare of anything, no sorrow or lamentation, no weeping or wayling, nor anything, that can grieve. This flesh of ours shall not be heavy, lumpish, or drowsie, mortall, passible, corruptible, or subject to torment, not so much as finger-ake (6).

So far Canfield has proceeded in a Thomistic fashion, describing Heaven in terms analogous to human experience. Yet he also combines this approach with Pseudo-Dionysian approach of negation, that whatever we say of Heaven is not true, because Heaven is so much greater than anything experienced on earth, even experiences of a rhapsodic or ecstatic nature. He closes with a rather neat paradox, which is all he thinks it possible to say in summary about the nature of Heaven:

"And therefore, as to our present knowledge, and to our now capacity, if we should take upon us to define, or describe heaven what it is, I know not how to do it better then to say thus: Heaven is that which it is not; and it is not that which it is" (7-8).

To explain this paradox, Canfield says that Heaven ultimately consists of the vision of God, and the direct vision of God is something that simply cannot be experienced on earth, nor comprehended in terms analogous to human experience. For if Heaven could be understood in terms of human experience, it would mean that Heaven could not be perfect, since all human experience is by its very nature imperfect. "And to say the truth, it were a great imperfection in heavens perfection, that it should be like anything heere, or we in our mortality capeable of anything there" (8). All that Canfield knows for certain is that Heaven consists of the vision of God, and the vision of God contains

every possible perfection, and that the vision, no matter how long it is entertained, never grows old or stale:

...that it is a vision of God, and that we shall be so delighted with this heavenly, and blissful gaze when wee come there, that when wee have beheld him incessantly as many thousand years, hee will still bee as new to us, as if we had never seen him before, and wee still more thirsty after his divine contemplation, then ever we were before or drinking after a hot days journey (8).

All human experience fails in comprehending such a vision, although the author turns naturally to human experience in an attempt to describe it:

"Howbeit to say now what this felicity is, or rather in what sort we shall apprehend God, or in what part, or power of us this feeling pleasure shall consist, when we come to see Christ, and glorified friends, we neither know, nor can we know heere" (8).

Although Canfield indicates that the joys of Heaven simply cannot be understood in terms of human experience, using earthly experience to comprehend them in some fashion is appropriate, because Canfield's point is that Heaven is an experience and not some form of intellectual construct. Heaven, to Canfield, is a real place, and when he gets there he shall experience actual things. There is no language

adequate to describe even our most simple experiences. We can write about how an apple tastes, but we can never know for sure what an apple tastes like unless we eat one. The slightest experience of God is greater than whole libraries of theological treatises about God, and this is Canfield's point:

Wee heare of many delicate fruites in strange countries, apples, peares, or plumbes, of most excellent taste, and verdure. The outsides are described to us, both for colour, shape, and bignesse. But none can tell us the sweetnesse, or delightfull relish of them within, untill we taste (8).

That Heaven is an experience, and not an idea; that it is a place, and not a state of mind; this is Canfield's final message of comfort, and it is the comfort that all the recusants turned to when faced with the rigors of imprisonment and death.

Notes

1 Benedict Canfield is often referred to in the literature as "Benoit de Canfield" or "Benet of Canfield". Since "Benedict Canfield" is used in the D.N.B. and in the Short Title Catalogue, I have adopted that spelling.

2 His early biographer was Jacques Brousse who published La Vie du Reverend Pere Ange de Joyeuse, predicateur capucin, autrefois duc, pair et marechal de France, et gouverneur pour le Roy en Languedoc. Ensemble les vies des R.R. P.P.P Benoist, et P. Atchange Escossois, du meme Ordre. An English edition, translated by Robert Rockwood, was published in 1623 at Douai and entitled, The Life of the Reverend FA. Angel of Joyeuse Capucin Preacher, Sometimes Duke, Peere, and Marshall of France, and Govenor for the Kinge in Languedoc Together with lives of the Reverend Fathers, Father Bennet Englishman, and Father Archangell Scotchman, of the Same Order. Some of the life of Benedict was written by himself when he entered the Capuchin Order. References in the text to this book are given as "Brousse".

3 Robert Person's Christian Directory was first printed in 1582 at his own press in Rouen. He later added additional material and further editions followed. It was a popular book in England, which led the Reverend Edmund Bunny of Merton College, Oxford, to revise the book along Protestant lines and reissue it in 1584 as a book acceptable to Protestant readers. "Some of the Catholic devotional works

were widely read, and when Edmund Bunny decided to pirate an edition of Person's Christian Directory he gave as a reason, in the preface dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, that so many people were reading the book that it seemed wise to produce an expurgated edition, removing all specifically Catholic references" (Adrian Morey 104).

4 Canfield's reading of Person's book also suggests an interesting parallel with Augustine. Augustine was put on the road to his eventual conversion by reading a book. "In the normal course of study I came across a book by Cicero, a man whose style, though not his heart, is almost universally admired. This book of his contains an exhortation to philosophy; it is called Hortensius. Now it was this book which altered my way of feeling, turned my prayers to you, Lord, yourself, and gave me different ambitions and desires. Every vain hope suddenly became worthless to me; my spirit was filled with an extraordinary and burning desire for the immortality of wisdom, and now I began to rise, so that I might return to you" (Augustine 56).

5 Augustine, too, in his Confessions drew a distinction between physical and spiritual pleasure, and commented upon the superiority of the spiritual. "Our talk reached this point: that the greatest possible delights of our bodily senses, radiant as they might be with the brightest of corporeal light, could not be compared with the joys of the eternal life, could not, indeed, even deserve a mention" (201).

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Both Fisher and More died on Tower Hill in 1535. The period following their deaths was a significant one for Catholic fortunes both in England and the Continent because not only had Catholicism reached the nadir of its existence, but the process of its revitalization had already been set in motion. Henry Lucas sees the year 1540 as the bottom point: "To observe in 1540 it seemed that Catholicism had reached the moment of dissolution" (621). What effect the deaths of Fisher and More had on the changes that were about to take place in European Catholicism is difficult to determine, but the year following their deaths Pope Paul III called the Italian diplomat Cantarini to Rome to head a commission to study the state of the Catholic Church and recommend changes to reverse its fortunes. This commission set the beginning stages for what ultimately resulted in the calling of the Council of Trent when it published its report in 1537 attacking the corruption in the Church (Olin 279). The political situation in Europe at the time, the rivalry between the two Catholic powers, France and the Empire, precluded the immediate calling of a council, but finally in 1544, the Pope summoned a general Church Council to meet in Trent.

In 1536, Reginald Pole, one of the driving forces behind the reform effort in the Catholic Church, wrote to Henry VIII an open letter which not only contained a stern indictment of Henry but also set forth an encomium of Fisher and More. Addressing the people of London, the city in which Fisher and More were tried and executed, Pole praised the executed pair:

People of London behold the head of Fisher, that most holy man! Severed from his body, it was affixed to a pike in the public view of all in London near the bridge of the Thames. Behold the head of More, that most guiltless of men! It was set up in the same place and given the same honor. Oh! What a mournful sight not only for the city of London alone but for all England! Oh! What a miserable spectacle not only for the country of England but for the whole world wherever the Christian name extends. Were these not the very men from whose virtues and literary talents England derived such great enjoyment? By their lives they provided England with a singular, saintly example. By their literary genius and talent they afforded their country able assistance in both private and public affairs. The judgement and testimony of the finest men clearly proved that no more useful had existed in our native land for many ages (204).

Pole drew an explicit comparison between both Fisher and More and Socrates:

You have killed many Socrates, you have killed many who were more useful to you than Socrates was to his people. Regardless of the number killed for the same reason as More was killed, they surpassed by far all the virtues that can be implied to Socrates. For what did Socrates have that could be compared...with the many virtues of More or of that great Bishop and Cardinal, Fisher...? (212)

What effect the last writings of Fisher and More had on Catholics at home and abroad is also difficult to assess. A ban was placed on their writings in England, which limited their availability. There were three editions of Fisher's A Spiritual Consolation and The Ways to Perfect Religion published in the sixteenth century. There was one edition published in the year of his death, 1535, possibly in London, but it was not reprinted until 1577. A Latin edition of works was published in Wurzburg in 1597, and this edition contained a Latin translation of A Spiritual Consolation and The Ways to Perfect Religion. That the writings of John Fisher had some effect upon the recusant resistance in England is indicated by the fact that a copy of Fisher's writings was found in 1588 in a cell in Winchester Prison occupied by recusant prisoners (Scarisbrick 89).

There were three editions of More's A Dialogue of Comfort published in the sixteenth century. The first printed edition was issued in 1553, the first year of Mary Tudor's reign, by Richard Tottel in London. In 1557, the year before Mary's death, the Works of Thomas More were printed in London by John Cawood, John Walys, and Richard Tottel. This edition was sponsored by William Rastell, the nephew of Thomas More. A third edition of the Dialogue of Comfort, based largely on the 1553 edition, was published in 1573 by John Fowler, who was married to the daughter of More's secretary, John Harris, and More's maid, Dorothy Colley.

Robert Southwell died at Tyburn in 1595. His Epistle of Comfort was reprinted several times. The first edition dates back to 1588, an edition which Southwell probably printed himself on a secret press he operated while residing in Lady Arundel's house. It was reprinted in 1605, 1608, and 1612. The number of reprints indicates that it enjoyed some success among his co-religionists. It also achieved a measure of success in its original aim, which was to provide comfort and strength to the Earl of Arundel, who was languishing in the Tower of London. Arundel survived Southwell by only eight months; he died in October.

Benedict Canfield was released from prison no later than 1603 and returned to France. There was a popular story bruited about that Canfield was released at the behest of his Protestant visitors because he was so successful in debate that he

proved an embarrassment to them. The truth is that he was probably released at the behest of the French king. His book, The Christian Knight, was published by John Legatt in London in 1619. That it had a noticeable impact on the recusant community is doubtful, since only one edition was ever published. After Canfield returned to France, he retired to his Capuchin monastery, where he lived a life of quiet until his death 1610. Just as the deaths of Fisher and More stand at the beginning of the recusant effort in England, so the death of Canfield conveniently marks its end. Canfield died in a year which was significant in some ways for the recusants in England. For not only did Canfield die in 1610, but the great English controversialist in the Catholic cause, Robert Persons, died in the same year. The year 1610 is also noteworthy because it was the year that Ben Jonson returned to the Anglican Church, an event suitable for marking the end of the great recusant writing effort in England.

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