

Of Paradise and Light

Essays on Henry Vaughan and John
Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum

Edited by
Donald R. Dickson and
Holly Faith Nelson

Offprint

2004



DELAWARE

Newark: University of Delaware Press

Time and the Word: A Reading of Henry Vaughan's "The Search"

Matthias Bauer

ALAN RUDRUM, IN HIS STUDY OF HENRY VAUGHAN, POINTS OUT that "a good way of ending one's reading of 'The Search,' and one that Vaughan obviously intended, is to ponder the meaning and relevance of the quotation from Acts 17:27–28 that Vaughan appends to it: *That they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far off from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being.* Another is to return to the beginning of the poem and read it as if it were the end, a suggestion which the reader may find strange, but which is perhaps fair enough if we recall that the poem, so much of which refers to the historical past, begins in the present tense."¹ In this essay, I would like to take up Rudrum's suggestions but, as it were, begin where he ends. This is shown to be an appropriate way of proceeding by Rudrum himself who suggests that we consider the beginning of the poem as its possible ending and thus become aware of its circular structure.

The quotation from Acts with which Vaughan's poem ends may be said to provide its *causa finalis*, as it shows, for example, the search for the Lord to be the task of everyone. But what exactly is the "meaning and relevance" of this biblical text? Syntactically, it consists of a final clause ("That they . . .") that depends on the previous verse and is followed by a dependent question ("if happily"),² as well as a concessive clause (beginning with the adverbative particle "though"), which refers either to the final clause or the dependent question (or to both) and which in turn is supplemented, in the next verse, by a causal clause ("for . . .") explaining one or several or all of the preceding statements. The relationship between the four clauses thus appears to be a flexible or even somewhat ambiguous one, inviting interpretation. The context of the verses is St. Paul's sermon on Mars' hill to the men of Athens who are reprovved for their superstition (Acts 17:22).

Paul has noticed the altar they erected "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" and offers to "declare" whom they "ignorantly worship" (17:23). He then goes on to explain to them that God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (17:24) nor "is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing" but rather provides everything himself, giving "to all life, and breath" (17:25) and determining "the times before appointed" to men "and the bounds of their habitation" (17:26). Time and space are determined and limited in order to make humankind "seek the Lord"—this is at least what seems to me the most plausible reading of the final clause with which Vaughan's quotation begins: "That they should seek the Lord. . . ." This construction—serving to emphasize that the very bounds of time and space make humankind seek God—is then completed by the concessive "though" clause; God appointed, as it were, a search, even though he has always been, or is already, present, for the searcher's own life and movement take place (with)in the Lord. Thus Luke's statement in the Authorized Version of Acts 17:27 (as well as in the Vulgate) is (at least latently) paradoxical: one is not to seek God because he is far away nor is one, haply, to find him because he is near but one is to seek and perhaps to find him although he is "not far off."³

The paradox of searching and finding in Vaughan's biblical motto may help us understand the remarkably circular nature of "The Search,"⁴ pointed out by Rudrum as the "second way of ending one's reading" of it, namely "to return to the beginning of the poem and to read it as if it were the end." This reading is suggested to Rudrum by the fact that the poem "begins in the present tense" even though so much of it "refers to the historical past." And indeed the treatment of time (and concomitantly, space) attracts the reader's attention: the predominant semantic field of traveling and pilgrimage, the striking sequence of tenses, the number of adverbs referring to place and time—all of which make it difficult to identify a clear temporal sequence in the speaker's account. The temporal and spatial relations are striking in spite or because of the fact that the pilgrim or wanderer is Vaughan's favorite poetic persona throughout *Silex Scintillans*,⁵ even more than other poems, "The Search" makes the reader wonder about the nature and goal of the journey and, accordingly, about the meaning of the poem itself.

A reading that takes into account the ambivalence of these relations may also contribute to overcoming the critical impasse marked by the contradictory positions of Louis Martz and Anthony Low. The one considers the poem as "a highly original

variation on the whole procedure of meditating on the life of Christ" and links it with the "Admonitions" regarding preparation for Communion in *The Mount of Olives*, whereas the other regards "The Search" and "Vanity of Spirit" as "rejections of meditation."⁶ To Martz, the journey to the place of the Temple, where the speaker is shown only "A little dust" (l.16) suggests the human body and, accordingly, St. Paul's "temple of the Spirit" (compare Acts 17:24): "It is within this 'Temple' that the Saviour will be found: not in the external places of his Incarnate manifestation." He finds his interpretation confirmed by the first stanza of the song that forms the latter part of the poem ("Who pores / and spies / Still out of doors / descries / Within them nought" [ll.76–80]). This "suggests that Christ is to be found within one's self, hence the phrase, 'Search well another world' suggests the little world of man." To Low, the poem cannot possibly be regarded as a genuine meditation since "Vaughan" (that is, the poet's persona) "is always too late. . . . He works against the full meditative effect." Referring to Martz, he points out that "the song seems to say that . . . one should search within. But in the context of the whole poem this reading does not hold, because searching within is precisely what Vaughan has done and is told to abandon." To Low, in "The Search" God is neither found in external nature (the "skin and shell of things" [l.81]) nor by meditating. He considers "The Search" as a rejection of meditation from a mystical point of view; the poet is to seek "another world, totally divorced from the knowable and imaginable."

To take this view, however, means rejecting the clarity and evidence of the beginning, for at this point the end seems obvious:

'Tis now clear day: I see a Rose
Bud in the bright East, and disclose
The Pilgrim-Sun;⁷

(ll.1–3)

The speaker makes his listeners or readers immediately share his experience. We witness with him the moment of daybreak, the "beautiful *now*" (in the words of Bach's cantata),⁸ which is, or seems to be, Christ himself, made manifest by the Rose, the symbol of Mary⁹ and the Church,¹⁰ which discloses him. "A Rose" itself, in a pun familiar from George Herbert's "The Rose," is a reference to the risen Christ, whose disclosure thus implies both his birth and his resurrection. The "Pilgrim-Sun," as Louis Martz has pointed out, coincides with Vaughan's notion of Jesus as a pilgrim and searcher in his *Mount of Olives*.¹¹ Thus, when the speaker, in line 3, begins to describe his search for Jesus during

the preceding night, he has already established a link in the form of likeness or imitation: "all night have I / Spent in a roving ecstasy / To find my Saviour" (ll.3–5).

At this point, Rudrum's conclusion (implicitly confirming Martz's reading) is entirely plausible: "the way in which the poem begins entitles us perhaps to think of it as *emotion recollected in tranquility* or at all events as an account of a search of which the object has been attained."¹² When Vaughan's persona is speaking or writing he is, as it appears, in view of the Savior—and what lies behind him, as we learn from his ensuing speech, is the desire to reach that very moment. But this clarity begins to disappear when one reads on. The account of the speaker's "roving ecstasy" is first given in the present perfect ("all night have I / Spent . . ." [ll.3–4]; "I have been / As far as *Bethlem*, and have seen / His inn . . ." [ll.5–7]) and then in the past tense ("I met the *wise-men*, asked them . . ." [l.8]). But the following indirect question only begins in the past tense ("where / He might be found" [ll.8–9]) and then switches to the present ("or what star can / Now point him out, grown up a Man?" [ll.9–10]). This could of course be explained as a shift from an indirect to a direct question ("I asked them: what star can now point him out?") and may be motivated by the rhyme but especially since it is closely linked paratactically to the indirect question by means of "or" the shift of tenses also implies a reference to the present day of the speaker. The question may have been asked during the night that lies behind him, but it nevertheless still seems to be current, as is emphasized by the prominent position of the word "Now" at the beginning of the line, which links up with the first "now" of "'Tis now clear day" (l.1). The second *now* implies a temporal distance: even though the speaker returns to the place of Christ's birth, he does not find him there as a child. He knows that he is "grown up a Man" (l.10). This would mean that the "Now" in line 10 refers to the time of the adult Jesus, to which the speaker has imaginatively returned and when he makes a journey to the places of Christ's childhood and youth. At any rate there is both a link and a tension between the two moments indicated by *now* in lines 1 and 10: both are distant from the time of Jesus' birth; but whereas the first *now* refers to the actual but symbolical presence of Christ in the "Rose" and the "Pilgrim-Sun," the second one refers to the historical person of Christ who is known to exist but is never actually met.

In spite of his knowledge (that Jesus is now "grown up a Man"), the speaker did not stop looking for Jesus as a child since—now again in the past tense—he says, "To *Egypt* hence I fled" (l.11).

He follows the Savior's tracks, moving both backward in time (from his present day to Bethlehem where the wise men are still to be found) and forward, following the course of Jesus' life. This double movement is not entirely unlike the one in Vaughan's "The Retreat," in which the speaker "long[s] to travel back" (l.21) only to move forward once again with the child ("And tread again that ancient track!" [l.22]). In "The Search," however, it is even more complex and involved. According to Matthew (2:12–13 AV), the wise men departed to their own country before Joseph was told in a dream to flee to Egypt but for Vaughan's speaker the sequence seems reversed.

Another aspect of time is introduced by the journey to Egypt: the natural cycle of fertility represented by the Nile as Egypt's "yearly nurse" (l.13). And when the speaker returns, continuing his past tense account, he finds the "doctors" but not the Temple where "Christ as a boy had been found 'both hearing them, and asking them questions' (Luke 2:46)."¹³ This implies further levels of time. The doctors are still there, a fact that might coincide with the time of Jesus "grown up a Man" but the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem means that the speaker in his "roving ecstasy" comes there after AD 70 and/or AD 135,¹⁴ long after Jesus' historical presence as a grown man. The doctors thus blend with later ones, such as the Doctors of the Church who, temporally speaking, are found between Vaughan's own days and the days of the New Testament. This casts some light on the *hysteron proteron* of the wise men, too: like the doctors they are latter-day guides in the speaker's search for Jesus. The first section of the poem (up to line 20) is concluded by yet another temporal perspective: a surmise in the past ("some said" [l.17]) concerning a future event ("Which would one day" [l.19]), which even from the present-day speaker's point of view is only to be hoped for: the moment when all shall be restored ("Awake, and then refine the whole" [l.20]).¹⁵

Having thus spanned the past and the future, the speaker in line 21 reverts to the present tense, but there is no doubt that he is still giving an account of his nightly journey rather than his present state: "Tired here, I come to *Sychar*; thence / To *Jacob's well*" (ll.21–22). Tense and time nevertheless agree, for the first use of the historical present¹⁶ in the poem goes along with a specific way of making the past present on the level of content: *Sychar* and *Jacob's well* are places Jesus visited (according to John 4:5–6, "wearied with his journey," just as the speaker is tired) in order to show the typological fulfillment of the Old Testa-

ment by the New: the well of Jacob turning into, or being replaced by, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Donald Dickson has pointed out that Vaughan's searcher "does not find Christ at Jacob's well," for "he has not yet understood the full importance of Christ as the *antitype* to such promissory events."¹⁷ The typological link is expressly evoked, though, when the speaker exclaims, "and here (O fate!) / I sit, where once my Saviour sate" (ll.27–28); but he cannot close the temporal gap between the moment of typological fulfillment in Christ and his own visit. The gap is felt especially since the historical present of "I come" is now the present of "I sit" and thus provides yet another moment at which the past events of the night and the present situation of the speaker are beginning to merge. This is underlined by "here," the equivalent of the "now" with which the poem begins. This moment is framed by a reference to Jacob's sons (l.23) and to his children (l.32), whose temporal relation to the past and present experience of the wanderer is quite complex. When the speaker tells us that he came to Jacob's well, which was "bequeathed since / Unto his sons" (ll.22–23), one may assume that his temporal journey actually brought him all the way back to the days of Jacob but that he knows what happened since; the "golden evenings" (l.24) of Jacob's sons would therefore belong to the period between his journey and his account of it. But when he sits "where once [his] Saviour sate" (l.28), we realize that he has come there at a much later time; he learns that "*Jesus had been there, / But Jacob's children would not hear*" (ll.31–32). While the Patriarchs' (Jacob's sons') "days" were "white" (l.26),¹⁸ a very similarly named group of persons, "*Jacob's children*" (l.32), rendered Christ's presence futile since they rejected his word.

The explanation of his absence is not given by wise men, doctors, or anonymous voices but, characteristically, by the voice of nature.¹⁹ The well itself whispers the truth; it provides a continuum between all the temporal and historical levels evoked and turns "Jacob's children" into a comprehensive name that includes the wanderer and his contemporaries.²⁰ If the typological fulfillment of the Old Testament by the New Testament remains fruitless, this is due to the failure of the latter counterparts of Jacob's sons. This is especially painful since, in Sir Thomas Browne's words, we, who may contemplate the localities of Christ's life and death, have our faith "thrust upon" us: "Nor is this much to believe, as we have reason, we owe this faith unto History: they only had the advantage of a bold and noble faith, who lived before his coming, who upon obscure prophesies and mysticall Types

could raise a belief, and expect apparent impossibilities."²¹ The sighs of the well, reminiscent of the little fountain and the "music of her tears" (l.52) in "Regeneration," give the speaker insight in the reason of his failure and make him wish to linger, to dwell on his feeling of nostalgic mournfulness. Jacob's sons are to be envied for they could still "expect apparent impossibilities" but his latter children do not even have the excuse of lacking historical evidence for their faith. The voice of nature is not the end of the speaker's quest, but neither is it left behind for he takes it with him when he rises "with the fountain" in his "eyes" (l.34). The whole poem could be read as an attempt to reestablish the full impact of believing in spite or even because of the fact that history does not give any certainty: *certum est quia impossibile est* [it is certain because it is impossible], as Browne in the same section quotes the famous dictum from Tertullian's *De carne Christi*.

In the following lines the time of the search is again indicated by the historical present that once more links up with the time of the opening lines by means of the deictic conjunction "here": "And here a fresh search is decreed / He must be found, where he did bleed" (ll.35–36). The speaker must not sit still; he receives orders to go on, even though the ensuing search of the garden and the cross will only provide him with "*Ideas* of his agony" (l.38) rather than the "*Corner-stone*" (l.48), that is, Christ himself. The account here reverts to the past tense ("I climbed the hill, perused the cross" [l.41]) and leads up to a direct speech made by the wanderer in the past: "Sure (then said I,) my quest is vain, / He'll not be found, where he was slain" (ll.49–50). Arriving there at a vaguely indicated period of history, the cross is still to be seen and interpreted emblematically as a pair of scales "Hung with my gain, and his great loss" (l.42) but, since the Crucifixion itself is past, Christ is gone. If we try to integrate the direct speech of lines 49 to 66 into the temporal structure of the whole poem, we meet a present speaker who reports the events of the preceding night in which he presents himself as a speaker describing his further plans. This temporal construction is further established by lines 67–68, which also refer to the speaker in the preceding night rather than the present one who begins the poem ("But as I urged thus, and writ down / What pleasures should my journey crown" [ll.67–68]).

The direct speech itself (lines 53 to 66), however, again reaches out to several temporal levels at once. It points to the future ("I'll to the wilderness" [l.53]) but it is again the past that motivates

the speaker, for "He lived there safe, 'twas his retreat" (l.55). On the level of biblical history, Vaughan's searcher does not go on²² after the Crucifixion to the Resurrection but goes back to the time immediately after Jesus' baptism when he was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1). He deliberately seems to leave out Easter and only speaks of it, as it were, unawares when he sees "a Rose / Bud in the bright East" (ll.1–2). The wilderness seems to be especially congenial to the speaker's desire, as he remembers that Christ transformed the desert by his presence,

and with his eyes,
Made those wild shades a Paradise,
Thus was the desert sanctified
To be the refuge of the bride;

(ll.61–64)

This future heaven ("I'll to . . ."), imagined in the past ("said I") and prepared ("Made") at a far earlier time is then enthusiastically envisaged with words echoing those with which the poem begins: "see, it is day, / The sun's broke through to guide my way" (ll.65–66). The poet here suggests an identity of times, a logical impossibility, after having established their difference. Does the poet's persona, during his journey in the night, imagine the morning which actually comes when the poem begins and when he starts remembering the journey? Or has he, in a kind of Möbius-strip reversal, actually left behind the "roving ecstasy" and reached the moment of line 1 again? If this is the case, the time when the poem is supposed to be written or spoken is not then the present of the beginning but comes later, for the exclamation of lines 65–66 is clearly fixed in the past: "But as I urged thus, and writ down / What pleasures should my journey crown" (ll.67–68).

The speaker envisages the transformed wilderness as a kind of *locus amoenus*, a happy place, the end or "crown" (l.68) of his journey where he "should rove" (l.71) but, it seems, never wishes to leave for he is content with the knowledge of Christ's past presence. It is an imagined or wildly anticipated paradise of nostalgia and thus as dangerous or illusionary as Herbert's "Paradise" would be without the presence of the strict gardener. He imagines a place of rest, where the journey, in a phrase ringing with etymological irony, is sugared with "success."²³ The success is only a sugarcoat, however, for as the speaker's ambiguous syntax suggests, the "sugaring" might be due to the speaker himself (or his pleasures) rather than the Lord:

I should rove in, and rest my head
Where my dear Lord did often tread,
Sugaring all dangers with success,

(ll.71–73)

The traditional “sweetness” of the Passion²⁴ is thus brought dangerously close to the “sugared lies” of Herbert’s “The Rose”; the passionate search threatens to be turned into something like an enthusiastic religious archeologist’s and nature lover’s success story.

But the poem does not end there. After the wise men (l.8), and the doctors (l.14), and the rumors, (l.17), and the whispering well (l.31), and the anonymous decree (l.35) there is yet another voice heard by the speaker that urges him onward, in contrast to the speaker’s own voice in lines 49 to 66 that urges him to go to the wilderness and stay there: “Me thought I heard one singing thus” (l.74). The similarity to the final call in Herbert’s “The Collar”²⁵ reinforces the impression that this is a divine voice. It is hardly to be located within the intricate poetic texture of times and tenses. Strictly (that is, grammatically) speaking, the song either belongs to the past and is sung before the speaker sees the “Rose / Bud in the bright East” (ll.1–2); or, if the morning is the same as the one in lines 65–66, it is sung later and remembered after the event. The implication of this ambivalent relation of tenses for the meaning of the poem is mainly that in the first case the speaker actually attains his goal (in terms of symbol and metaphor), whereas in the second he remains a searcher, driven by the (present) imperatives with which the song begins and ends: “Leave, leave, thy gadding thoughts” (l.75) and “Search well another world; who studies this, / Travels in clouds, seeks *manna*, where none is” (ll.95–96). But it seems the very point of Vaughan’s ambivalence as regards grammatical tenses to make us realize the limits of temporal logic itself when it comes to him who “hath determined the times before appointed” (Acts 17:26). The point is confirmed by the fact that the temporal ambivalence which comes to the fore in the first part of the poem is complemented by a spatial one that is especially prominent in the song. Of course, the many adverbs and pronouns of place in the first part (“here,” “there,” “where,” “thither”) and the references to time in the song (“still,” “old”) qualify this distinction, but while the complicated relations of time are highlighted in the first part, spatial relationship is emphasized in the song. A visible indica-

tion of this is the different layout of the lines with their alternating lengths.

The striking spatial ambivalence of the song seems to be one of the reasons for the conflicting readings of the poem by Martz and Low, but it may also help us realize that both readings fall somewhat short of its complexity.²⁶ The first imperative tells the speaker to “Leave, leave,” that is, to go on but leave behind him the misdirected movement of the gadding thoughts, the imaginary success of a desert-turned-paradise. This *inside* is in fact no inside at all as it consists of thoughts that make the speaker stray abroad; moreover, the temporal adverb “Still” (l.78), which here primarily means *always*,²⁷ should be taken into account, too. The voice thus does not reject the outside world in general but rather the permanent, exclusive mental devotion to it. “Still out of doors” refers to the wilderness as the *outside* par excellence, which the speaker regards as the end of his journey (“What pleasures should my journey crown” [l.68]) even though Christ himself, as a closer look at his Word might have told him and as the very fact of his absence might have made him remember, only stayed there for a period of forty days. The voice reminds the speaker (and the reader) of Christ by the very words chosen to instruct him, for the “doors” within which he is told to look point to him who said “I am the door” (John 10:9) and in whom, as the epigraph explains, “we live, and move, and have our being.”²⁸ “Still out of doors” could thus well refer to a kind of introspection and meditation that remains *outside* Christ.

The *outside* in a slightly different sense is referred to again by “The skin, and shell of things” (l.81) in the second stanza of the song, but this shell is, remarkably, not contrasted with a core or kernel but with “wings” (l.87), instruments that may carry the addressee swiftly to further regions rather than *inside*. Again a biblical reference, which links up the words of the song with the very wilderness the speaker is told to leave, makes clear that *outside* may well become *inside* and vice versa. The “mere despair / of wings” (ll.86–87) that makes the speaker consider the “skin, and shell of things” refers to Revelation 12, which was already evoked by the speaker’s memory of Christ sanctifying the desert by his stay so that it could become “the refuge of his bride” (l.64). This is the “woman clothed with the sun” (Rev. 12:1), a mystical image of the mother of God who, pursued by the dragon, “fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God” (12:6) and who is “given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly *into* the wilderness, *into* her place, where she is nour-

ished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (12:14, italics added). The reference to the wings thus implies a mysterious reference to time as well, reminding the reader of time as the essential condition of the speaker's search (who moves in time but is never *in time* for Jesus), as it is reflected by the complex structure of tenses and times in the first part of the poem.

The advice of the song does not reject either *inside* or *outside* or both but warns against an outside incapable of becoming another inside and vice versa. This can also be seen in the last stanza of the song. Christ cannot be forced to stay in the material remnants of the past ("old elements / or dust" ll.88–89), for this would mean consigning him to a historical "reality" that turns out to be a cloud-cuckoo-land. To be in this world means to be outside it, "in clouds"—which is just another word for being inside a fantasy world of one's own invention.²⁹ Accordingly, the voice decrees "Search well another world" (l.95)—not the little world of man, as Martz assumes, but the "country / Far beyond the stars" (ll.1–2), as Vaughan calls it in "Peace," a poem in which the soul is told, very much like the speaker of "The Search": "Leave then thy foolish ranges" (l.17).

Verbal echo gives a hint as to how this new journey is to be undertaken: "Search well another world." This connects with earlier uses of "well" in the poem: "*Jacob's well*," where in the "white days" (l.26) his sons drove home "Their *well-fleeced* train" (l.27). To the wanderer, this is a speaking well, which reminds him that "*Jacob's children would not hear*" (l.32) God's word. The speaker is told to "search well" rather than be content with the "hallowed wells" (l.70) of a landscape visited as a nostalgic tourist-pilgrim. The implicit reference to the word of God as the world to be studied instead of "this" one is confirmed by the search for "*manna*" (l.96), which, like the wings, once more refers to the wilderness.³⁰ In Matthew's account, Jesus is tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread. Jesus' well-known answer ("Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" [Matt. 4:4; compare Luke 4:4]) typologically refers to the manna given to Israel in the desert, a connection already made in the verse from Deuteronomy (8:3) quoted by Jesus. Thus God's word is the true end of the search, just as his Word, preached by St. Paul, is the end of "The Search" as it consists in the epigraph from Acts 17.

The function of the wilderness in the "The Search" becomes a little clearer when we look at a poem which is in many ways

congenial with it (published twenty-one years after the first part of *Silex Scintillans*) and in which Jesus himself is shown to identify the desert of Exodus 16 with the place of his temptation:

Man lives not by bread only, but each word
Proceeding from the mouth of God; who fed
Our fathers here with manna;³¹

(*Paradise Regained*, 1.349–51)

In *Paradise Regained*, Jesus' time in the wilderness (rather than his death and resurrection) is presented as the eschatological counterpart to the Fall. It is almost as if Milton had shared the speaker's view in "The Search" who does not think he can find the Savior "where he was slain" (l.50) but rather where he "Made those wild shades a Paradise" (l.62) or, in Milton's words, "And *Eden* raised in the waste wilderness" (l.7). This is a place where he is "with dark shades and rocks environed round" (l.194) and where, to Christ in his "holy meditations" (l.195) *inside* and *outside* interact.³² The lesson to be derived from this, however, is not an encouragement to dwell on fantasies of a wilderness transformed into a *locus amoenus* but to realize that the bewildering experience of time was shared by Christ himself. To be *in time*, *tempus*, means to be subjected to temptation. As Milton's Christ says to his tempter (4.174–75): "But I endure the time, till which expir'd / Thou hast permission on me."³³ Vaughan's speaker is tempted by a vision of *Paradise Regained* not at all unlike the tempting vision presented to Jesus by Satan. The shades are turned into Eden, however, and the (temporal) word points to the Word because Christ voluntarily endured (the) time.

The danger from which Vaughan's speaker is rescued by the singing voice³⁴ is his desire to indulge in a vision which, though it formally gives credit to the "dear Lord," runs the risk of turning the speaker into one of those men who "in themselves seek virtue" (*Paradise Regained* 4.314), and instead of "True wisdom" (4.319) only meet "An empty cloud" (4.321; compare "The Search": "Travels in clouds" [l.96]). In "Vanity of Spirit" Vaughan's speaker comes to realize that he can only catch a "little light" (l.28) before death; unlike the broken letters met within the heart in Herbert's "JESU" the hieroglyphics of the Lord's name cannot be puzzled out in this life. As "The Search" makes clear, however, the very process indicates a necessity: to live means to search and to realize the vanity of one's insight, that is, of one's own spirit but nevertheless to go on searching "another world."

Though the search may go on, however—and this is where the “beautiful now” is to be considered once again—living in time means to begin. In “The Search,” as in *Paradise Regained*, the focus is on Christ as “our morning star, then in his rise” (1.294). Milton chooses the beginning of Christ’s public course of life as the epitome of his redemptive act of obedience, his humbly becoming a human being. This is the moment when he “no more should live obscure, / But openly begin” (1.287–88). Milton’s Christ at this point knows “the time / Now full” (1.286–87), and even Satan realizes that “Now at full age, fulness of time” the prophecies of Christ are “best fulfilled” (4.380–81). The endurance of time by Christ is the paradoxical reason why the erring, tempted human wanderer may become Christlike, that is, like the “Pilgrim-Sun.” They share the *now*, the moment of sunrise, which like the dawn in Augustine’s famous meditation on time (*Confessiones* 11.18.24) enables the onlooker to predict the future rise of the sun (which itself does not belong to the future but already *is*), a prediction impossible “nisi animo imaginärer,” if one did not possess a mental image of it, that is, impossible without the presence of a past moment.³⁵ The end of the search, as well as the reason for its repetition, is thus to be found in the *now* as the kind of religious *carpe diem* demanded in “The Check”: “play not away / Thy glimpse of light” (ll.23–24). The coexistence of the presence of the past, the present and the future in this moment is, in the Augustinian pattern, “a reflection of the simultaneous presence of all ‘timeless moments’ in the Divine Mind.”³⁶

In “The Search” the relationship of temporal image and eternal presence is ambivalent: introspection and mental pictures are necessary, but they may tempt into a vanity of spirit; the past is the record of Jesus’ enduring time as a man but being fixed on the remnants of the past means being preoccupied with “The skin, and shell of things”; the mental or imaginary may thus turn out to be merely material. But the reverse is also true: the speaker’s movement proves to be a perfectly circular one when he comes to say “see, it is day” both in the past and the present; he has to begin again and again but this very beginning is an image of Christ who is symbolized by the morning sun. In terms of letters, “old elements” (1.88) or (as in “Vanity of Spirit”) “broken letters scarce remembered” (1.24), “being” is a re-ordering or a remembering of “begin.” In this sense, the ending of the poem, the quotation from Acts 17, which ends with the word “being,” is its true beginning. The paradox of having to search for the Lord although he is not far off is thus mimetically (or iconically) repre-

sented and enacted (rather than expressly reflected) in the poem. Its scintillating grammar itself imitates its biblical motto. Within “the time before appointed” to him (Acts 17:26) the speaker lives and moves and writes in search of the Lord and thus gives evidence of what Luke’s text says, that he has his being in the Word.

NOTES

1. Alan Rudrum, *Henry Vaughan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council, 1981), 74.

2. *If* is here to be regarded as a synonym of *whether*; see *OED* “if” 9. and “whether” II. *conj.* 4. “Happily” is used in the archaic sense “1. By chance; perchance; = HAPLY.”

3. The Vulgate also has a concessive clause: “quamvis non longe sit ab unoquoque nostrum” [which the Douai-Rheims translation of the Vulgate renders as “although he be not far from every one of us”]. Luther seems to eliminate the concession and thus the paradox (“Und zwar er ist nicht ferne von einem jeglichen unter uns” [“and in fact he is not far from any one among us”]), in accordance with what today is accepted as the standard Greek version (“καί γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα”). Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, ed., *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 23rd ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1963), note a Greek variant, however, which has the adversative particle *καὶ τοῦ* instead of *καί γε* and on which the AV translation is obviously based. The Vulgate and the Authorized Version thus seem to give evidence to a certain similarity of the biblical verse to the classical topos of *nosce teipsum* (as in the last two lines of Herbert’s “Content”): what is right next to the seeker is most difficult to find.

4. Circles are of course to be found throughout *Silex Scintillans*, such as the circle of human life in the speaker’s desire to become a child again (“Childhood”), the circle of doing “what was done before” by Christ (“The Hidden Treasure” 1.2) or the circle of sin and repentance within “this round of life and death” (“Repentance” 1.73); moreover, Vaughan’s poems are frequently circular in that the ending repeats or echoes the beginning (e.g., in “Righteousness” or “Quickness”). The specific way in which the circularity of the poem enacts the circularity of the subject in “The Search” will be discussed here.

5. See Inge Leimberg, *“Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis”*: *Die geistliche Lyrik der englischen Frühaufklärung* (Münster: Waxmann, 1996), 404–15, especially 410–12 on the characteristic “here-and-now” of Vaughan’s pilgrim-speaker and the pattern of the searching wanderer as the successor of the Fathers in Hebrews 11. I am grateful to Inge Leimberg for a number of suggestions and in particular for the critical discussion that made me reconsider the representation of time in “The Search.”

6. For these and the following quotations see Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 85, 88, 90; and Anthony Low, *Love’s Architecture: Devotional Modes in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 183–88. Low’s view seems to be shared by Stevie Davies, *Henry Vaughan* (Bridgend: Seren, 1995), 157, whose main emphasis, however, is on a political interpretation of lines 16–20.

7. *Silex Scintillans* is quoted from Alan Rudrum's edition of *Henry Vaughan: The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983). L. C. Martin's edition of *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), has also been consulted throughout.

8. See the recitativo "Mein Gott! Wann kommt das schöne: Nun!" [My God! When does it come, the beautiful: now!] from his cantata no. 82, BWV 82 ("Ich habe genug"); cf. Christiane Lang-Graumann, *Counting Ev'ry Grain: Das Motiv des Allerkleinsten in George Herberts "The Temple"* (Münster: Waxmann, 1997), 207n14. Horace H. Underwood, "Time and Space in the Poetry of Vaughan," *Studies in Philology* 69 (1972): 234–35, points out the significance of "the point of contact between time and eternity, the Day of Judgment, symbolized by dawn" in Vaughan. George Herbert expressed the idea of a momentary vision paradigmatically in "The Glimpse": "Whither away delight? / Thou cam'st but now; wilt thou so soon depart, / And give me up to night?" (ll.1–3). See Lang-Graumann, 203–68; especially 207–09 and 218–25 on the traditional theological interpretation of the moment (from Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa) which has its biblical origin in the account of the walk to Emmaus and the momentary opening of the disciples' eyes (Luke 24:30–31).

9. Noted with regard to "The Search" by Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 87.

10. Cf. Song of Solomon 2:1, "I am the rose of Sharon," traditionally interpreted as a typological reference to the Church. Martz also points out that Vaughan twice refers to Christ as the "Rose of Sharon" in his Communion meditations (*The Poetry of Meditation*, 87).

11. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* 87; Martin, ed., *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, 161.

12. Rudrum, *Henry Vaughan*, 75.

13. See Rudrum's note on l.14 of "The Search."

14. See Rudrum's note on ll.15–16 of "The Search."

15. Cf. Rudrum's note comparing "The Book," ll.25–27.

16. On the historical present see Wilhelm Franz, *Die Sprache Shakespeares in Vers und Prosa: Shakespeare-Grammatik*, 4th ed. (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1939), 516–18 (§ 633–34), and N. F. Blake, *A Grammar of Shakespeare's Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 109 (4.3.2).

17. Donald R. Dickson, *The Fountain of Living Waters: The Typology of the Waters of Life in Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 141.

18. On the typological and historical meaning of Jacob for Vaughan, see the chapter "Patriarchs and Pilgrims" in Philip West, *Henry Vaughan's "Silex Scintillans": Scripture Uses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25–62.

19. Cf. Rudrum's observations on the relationship of historical and natural reference in the poem (*Henry Vaughan*, 73). The example of the whispering spring shows, however, that the natural reference already belongs to the first part of the poem and not only, as Rudrum suggests, to the lyric that forms its second part.

20. Thus I would qualify the statement in John R. Mulder, *The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 148: "But God resides no longer in the typical places of His grace; the temple is 'a little dust,' and Jacob's well 'an angry Spring.' The types have been discarded, because the promise implied in them has been fulfilled."

The Spring has not been discarded because it is "angry" but it is angry because no one listens to what the Lord says.

21. Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici and other Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 10 (1.9).

22. Cf. Rudrum: "The reader will notice that the chronological scheme . . . is broken at the point where the poet decides *I'll to the wilderness*" (*Henry Vaughan*, 72).

23. *OED* "success" *n.*: "†1.a. That which happens in the sequel; the termination (favourable or otherwise) of affairs . . ." (last example 1733). On the speaker's error in seeking "success" see Leimberg, 460. E. C. Pettet, *Of Paradise and Light: A Study of Vaughan's "Silex Scintillans"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 113, points out the significance of "the interpolated lines 47–48 from the translation of Ovid's *De Ponto*, lib. 3" for lines 69–70 of "The Search": "These errors grieve: and now I must forget / Those pleased ideas I did frame and set / Unto my self, with many fancied *springs* / and *groves*, whose only loss new sorrow brings" (ll.45–48).

24. On the sweetness of the Passion and related ideas of divine sweetness, see Friedrich Ohly, *Süsse Nägel der Passion: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Semantik* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1989). His analysis is based mainly on patristic and medieval sources.

25. Pointed out by Martin, ed., *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, 730.

26. When Louis Martz explains the speaker's desire to go to the wilderness as a search for solitude which "becomes the symbol for the spiritual retirement of the soul (the bride of Christ) in its devotions," he does not seem to take into account that the singing voice rejects the speaker's imaginary retreat and tells him to leave his "gadding thoughts" (*The Poetry of Meditation*, 89). And when Anthony Low reads the poem as a double rejection of looking for God in external nature and in "the world within" (*Love's Architecture*, 187) he does not seem to consider that the singing voice reminds the speaker of the fact that he "Who pores / and spies / Still out of doors / describes / Within them nought" (ll.76–80). Moreover, the verb "describes," which denotes visual perception, hardly suggests "the imageless world of the *via negativa*" (*Love's Architecture*, 183, a notion that in itself seems problematic).

27. *OED* 3.a. *Obs. exc. poet.*

28. Cf. Vaughan's "Retirement": "Up then, and keep / Within those doors, (my doors) dost hear? *I will*" (ll.54–55).

29. Cf. *OED* "cloud" 9. a. and b. (where "in the clouds" is glossed as "Obscure, mystical; fanciful, unreal").

30. The connection is underscored by the fact that the poem at this final stage, after the embracing and alternating rhymes and varying line lengths of the song, returns to the rhyming couplet, albeit in pentameter rather than tetrameter lines, which were used in the first part. The special character of the final couplet is also emphasized by the fact that whereas in the first two stanzas of the song, there is an embracing rhyme formed by the first and last lines of each stanza, this pattern is given up in the third stanza where the first line ("To rack old elements") is without rhyme. There is an irony in this: the "old elements," referring to elementary nature as well as to letters (*OED* "element" 14.a.) are—as the final couplet points out—to be replaced by the other world of God and his word. "Elements" moreover, provide a hint to the Eucharist (*OED* "element" 3.), which is then taken up by the reference to manna.

31. Quoted from John Carey's edition of Milton's *Complete Shorter Poems* (London: Longman, 1981).

32. Cf. 1.196–98: "O what a multitude of thoughts at once / Awakened in me swarm, while I consider / What from within I feel myself, and hear / What from without comes often to my ears."

33. For the paronomastic field including *tempus* and *temptation*, see, for example, *Paradise Regained*, 2.378: "To whom thus Jesus temperately replied" or 2.404–8: "Only th' importune tempter still remained / And with these words his temptation pursued. / By hunger, that each other creature tames, / Thou art not harmed, therefore not moved; / Thy temperance invisible besides." For the notion of time in *Paradise Regained*, see, for example, 3.182–83, echoing Ecclesiastes 3:1: "All things are best fulfilled in their due time, / And time there is for all things."

34. For the divine call that intervenes, cf. *Paradise Regained* 3.433–35: "Yet he at length, time to himself best known, / Rememb'ring Abraham by some wondrous call / May bring them back repentant and sincere."

35. See also the comprehensiveness of the *now* in 11.20: "tempora 'sunt' tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris" [there are three times: a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things] in Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones: Lateinisch und Deutsch*, ed. Joseph Bernhart (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984).

36. C. A. Patrides, "The Renaissance of the Renaissance: T. S. Eliot and the Pattern of Time," *The Michigan Quarterly Review* 12 (1973): 192. See also Lang-Graumann, 219–22; Louis Martz, *The Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 17–31, discusses Vaughan's "Augustinian Quest"; his general statement, "the way home lies through an interior ascent," however, has to be qualified in the light of "The Search."