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## A Note on Herbert's "Easter" and the Sidneian Psalms

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George Herbert Journal

George Herbert Journal

Volume 1, Number 2, Spring 1978

pp. 44-48

10.1353/ghj.1978.0006

ARTICLE

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### In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

A Note on Herbert's "Easter" and the Sidneian Psalms by Noel J Kinnamon The evidence for Herbert's knowledge of the metrical psalms of Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke is mainly circumstantial, but still persuasive. Coburn Freer has summarized the main reasons for supposing "that Herbert had more than just a casual acquaintance" with the poems the wide circulation of the metrical psalter in manuscript, the great variety of lyrical forms used by the Sidneys and their "attempt to suit form to meaning." and Herbert's family ties with the Sidneys, as well as "the proximity of Bemerton to Wilton." Although apparently no concrete internal evidence has been found to lend weight to the argument, there are some intriguing, previously unnoticed parallels between Herbert's "Easter" and the Countess of Pembroke's early version of Psalm 108 (still in manuscript) which may be more than coincidental. The Countess's poem survives in a transcription of one of the most important manuscripts, which Professor

Ringler suggests was a working copy (full of revisions) kept either at Wilton or at the Pembroke residence in London.<sup>2</sup> Because Psalm 108 is composed, even in the Biblical text, of parts of Psalms 57 and 60, the Countess first simply combined the paraphrases she had already made of the corresponding verses from those earlier Psalms: Psalm 57:7-11 and Psalm 60:5-12 (altered slightly to accommodate the minor changes in the Biblical text).<sup>3</sup> The poem thus falls into two distinct parts, each with its own verse form: a'0 b4 b4 c7 c7 a6 for Psalm 108:1-5 and a'0 b8 a8 b6 for verses 6-13.<sup>4</sup> The most interesting structural parallel between the Countess's poem and Herbert's "Easter" is this simple division into two metrically different sections. There is less correspondence in details. Although Herbert also uses stanzas of six and four lines, the meters are different from those used by the Countess: a'0 a'0 b'0 b4 c'0 c10 and, even more simply, a8 b8 a8 b8. The similarity of wording in the first sections of the Countess's and Herbert's poems comes partly from the fact that "Easter" is based on the verses which are common to both Psalms 57 and 108. Here are the first two stanzas of the Countess's version of Psalm 108, followed by the texts of the Prayer Book Psalter and the Geneva Bible for comparison:

44 A NOTE ON "EASTER" My heart is prepar'd, praepared is my heart To spredd thy prayse With tuned layes Wake my tongue, my lute awake Thou my Harp ye consort make Myself will be are a part. Myself the first when Morning shall appeare My voice & string So will Thee sing That this Earthly globe & all Treading on this earthly Ball My praying notes shall heare<sup>5</sup> Prayer Book: Psalm 57: 8 My heart is fixed, O God. my heart is fixed: I will sing, and give praise. 9 Awake up, my glory, awake, lute and harp: I myself will awake right early<sup>10</sup> I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. Prayer Book: Psalm 60 O GOD, my heart is ready, my heart is ready I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have. 2 Awake, thou lute, and harp: I myself will awake right early<sup>3</sup> I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people: and I will sing unto thee among the nations<sup>45</sup> Noel J. Kinnamon Geneva Bible: Psalm 108 1 O God, mine heart is prepared, so is my tongue: I will sing & give praise 2 Awake viole & harpe: I will awake early. 3 I wil praise thee, o Lord, among the people, and I wil sing vnto thee among the nacions. The following ten lines from the first section of "Easter" are especially close to the paraphrase and the Biblical texts (notice in particular the similarity to the Countess's development of the musical image and her use of the word "consort"): Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise Without d...

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by Noel J. Kinnaman

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The Countess's poem survives in a transcription of one of the most important manuscripts which Professor Ringler suggests was a working copy (full of revisions) kept either at Wilton or at the Pembroke residence in London.<sup>2</sup> Because Psalm 108 is composed, even in the Biblical text, of parts of Psalms 57 and 60, the Countess first simply combined the paraphrases she had already made of the corresponding verses from those earlier Psalms: Psalm 57:7-11 and Psalm 60:5-12 (altered slightly to accommodate the minor changes in the Biblical text).<sup>3</sup> The poem thus falls into two distinct parts, each with its own verse form: a<sup>10</sup> b<sup>8</sup> b<sup>4</sup> c<sup>7</sup> c<sup>7</sup> a<sup>6</sup> for Psalm 108:1-5 and a<sup>10</sup> b<sup>8</sup> a<sup>4</sup> b<sup>4</sup> for verses 6-13.<sup>4</sup> The most interesting structural parallel between the Countess's poem and Herbert's "Easter" is this simple division into two metrically different sections. There is less correspondence in details. Although Herbert also uses stanzas of six and four lines, the meters are different from those used by the Countess: a<sup>10</sup> a<sup>10</sup> b<sup>10</sup> a<sup>4</sup> c<sup>10</sup> c<sup>10</sup> and, even more simply, a<sup>5</sup> b<sup>6</sup> a<sup>6</sup> b<sup>6</sup>.

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