Thesis Approved

By

Robert Noren

Major Adviser

Dean
ROBERT SOUTHWELL
EXPONENT OF RELIGIOUS POETRY
IN
THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

BY
SISTER M. AGNES HAGANEY, O.S.B.

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To Mary Immaculate
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In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

Ben Jonson could have had the Jesuit poet, Robert Southwell, in mind when he wrote the lines quoted above, for certainly they well apply to the lovable crusader for better norms in the art of poetry in the troubled times of the Elizabethan Age. Among literary historians Robert Southwell is invariably considered a minor Catholic poet whose spiritual beliefs led him eventually to forfeit his life as a traitor to the Crown.

In the following study the purpose of the writer has been to show at length how this poet through his life, his training, and his vocation was fitted in a remarkable manner to become the Exponent of Mysticism in Elizabethan England. More than any other poet of his age or in the century that followed, Robert Southwell directed all his efforts to the attainment of the "one thing necessary." He slighted no means to help him to his end, so it is not strange that he, who borrowed the forms of profane love poetry to sing of Divine Love, should have been declared "Blessed" in the Christmas season of 1929, nearly three and a half centuries after he shed his blood at Tyburn, "looking most cheerfully."
Amazing as is the accumulation of studies centering about this poet, the end is not yet. Scholars, interested in completing the picture of Catholics during the Elizabethan persecution, find Robert Southwell and his contribution to religion and literature an ever fruitful source of knowledge and inspiration.

It has been a privilege to study Robert Southwell in relation to his times, his ideals, his literary aims, his ultimate contribution to English literature, and to stress the mystic note buried beneath the Euphuistic mannerisms of his poetry.

Pascal in a thoughtful moment wrote that writers would be more accurate in speaking of "our" rather than "my" book, for so much of so many others must go into any piece of writing. His thought may be applied to this particular study in an especial way. To the many who have so generously contributed of their time, their help and their encouragement, I wish to express my sincere gratitude. I am most indebted to Mother Alfred Schroll and my Benedictine Sisters of Mount Saint Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas, for the opportunity of graduate study. I wish to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to Doctor Robert Nossen, whose graciousness and encouragement in the direction of the study, has made the time spent in research most pleasant and profitable.
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CHAPTER I

LIFE OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL

In the year 1561 Robert Southwell, Jesuit, Martyr and the most influential Catholic poet of sixteenth century England, was born at Saint Faith's in Norwich.\footnote{Pierre Janelle, Robert Southwell the Writer. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), p. 6. Unless otherwise indicated, the data for this chapter has been taken from this very detailed and scholarly work.} This confiscated Benedictine priory had been presented to his grandfather, Richard Southwell, by Henry VIII. Robert’s father vacillated between the forthright demands of the Old Faith and the obvious benefits of the New; but his mother, Bridget Copley, had a strong determination that her son, Robert, should be brought up in the Faith of his ancestors. Not a trace of evidence remains to show how she succeeded so well in nurturing the Faith in his sensitive soul.

In fact, but a single, rather dramatic incident in the childhood of the poet is known; he had been kidnapped by gypsies but remained in their possession only a short time before his nurse recovered him. His deep sense of indebtedness to her who had saved him from the fate of being reared in the non-Catholic environment of
A gypsy camp, is revealed in a meditation still extant and to the fact that he sought her to help her spiritually when he came to England as a priest.

Apart from the gypsy incident nothing further is known of the poet until his fifteenth year when he was sent by his parents to the University of Douay in Flanders. Founded by Philip II of Spain, this University was becoming the intellectual center for Catholic Englishmen, who were barred from the institutions of higher learning in their own land. There he resided and received tutorial instruction; at Anchin, the Jesuit College at Douay, he enrolled and attended the regular course of classes.

Although his stay at Douay lasted only from June, 1576, until November of the same year, its influence had a lasting effect upon his future life. Here he had for the first time come in contact with Jesuit teaching and devotional practices with the result that he began to think deeply about the Society of Jesus.

The English College (Anchin) was inspired by the new spirit of the Council of Trent.

It embodied a scheme of education which in its main features had first been outlined in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Thus the old homely spirit of the English Universities and leavening influence of the Counter-Reformation, were intimately blended; a mingling of elements
which were seldom to combine in such a way.²

Doctor William Allen, the founder of the English College and a Fellow of Oriel College, endeavoured to preserve the character of the English College. He understood the hold that the heretics had upon the English people because of their command of the vernacular. By his direction and command, sermons were preached on Sundays and feast days by the students of the Douay College. Most of the time for school work proper was devoted to the humanities in which

Southwell, to judge from his later success must already have been a proficient pupil. The atmosphere and literary pursuits of the college, must, however, have paled in his own memory by the side of its spiritual influence; for it had shown him the ways of the perfect life—in other words, turned his youthful thoughts towards the Society of Jesus.³

The refugees at the College were conscious of the great affront offered to God by the state of religion in their own country and endeavoured, as a result, to make reparation by leading prayerful and penitential lives. William Allen endorsed the serious performance of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. This is significant as the Exercises would tend to turn souls like Southwell's to the consideration of the vocation to the

² Ibid., p. 7.
³ Ibid., p. 9.
Society. Frequent Communion and Confession were prescribed at Douay, and great stress was laid upon the practice of "simpler virtues suitable for a soldier in the army of Christ."  

Naturally, the atmosphere of the College developed in the sensitive and ardent spirit of Southwell the desire to embrace the religious life. His difficulty was to determine in which Order he might best serve God. His inclination was to choose the most ascetic, the Carthusian, which would bring him more quickly to the end of his desire, union with God; his practical nature recoiled from electing that life which would please him but be of less profit to the souls of others at a time when the great need was for vocations to the apostolic life. After a long period during which he was torn between the "bark of Bruno and that of Ignatius, yet unable to reach either, being well-nigh drowned by the beating waves of temptation," he finally settled in his mind to join the Society of Jesus.  

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4 Ibid., p. 11.
The reasons he gave for entering the Society were:

The purpose of my entry is, first that by constant mortification of self, by sincere contempt of the world and by a perfect observance of my rule and my vows I may become, as far as I can, like unto Christ who was crucified for me, and may strive with all my heart to love Him; second, that I may do penance for the numberless sins I have committed against God; third, that mistrusting my own weakness, poverty and ignorance, I may in all things commit myself to the authority of His ministers and representatives, and entrust to them the entire care of my soul and my body; lastly, that, if the will of God, as made known to me by superiors, should so ordain, I may with all my energies devote myself to the salvation of my neighbour.

Because of popular feeling against Philip II even in Catholic Flanders, it became expedient for the English College to move eventually to Rheims. As early as 1576 many of the students had withdrawn to safer places; Southwell retired to Paris for eight months or a year. Though short, this period was an important time in his life.

He attended the Jesuit institution College de Clermont, coming under the spiritual direction of Thomas Darbyshire, whose insight into the fervent nature of the youth, did much to cool and soothe his ardor. At this time the thought uppermost in Southwell’s mind was that if he could go to Rome, the center of Jesuit activity,

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he would be able to prevail upon the Superiors to per-
mit him to enter the novitiate.

The College de Clermont did not have the English
atmosphere of either Douay or Anchin; it was not even
French in its spirit, for most of the teachers were
either Spanish or Italian. The students had to speak
Latin in their everyday life. Only the classics were
taught, and emphasis was placed on Cicero, Ovid and Vir-
gil.

He [Southwell] retained the use of his mother-
tongue in the narrow English circle in which he
spent his leisure time, and was placed during his
school hours in an artificial neo-classical at-
mosphere. Of France, of her language or litera-
ture, he neither learnt nor remembered anything.7

In 1577 Robert set out for Rome, but to his great
disappointment, he was advised by the Jesuit Superiors to
continue his studies for a year before entering the Soci-
ety. It was then that he wrote a sincere though rhetor-
ical lament bewailing the waiting period, likening him-
self to Agar exiled from Abraham's house.

The time of waiting having elapsed, Robert was
received into the Society, and after a two-year noviti-
ate, he made vows on October 18, 1580. As a Scholastic
he was called upon to complete his studies in philosophy

and theology, attending classes in those subjects until the summer of 1585. He was "repititor," or tutor, from 1582. In 1584 he was ordained to the priesthood. When he completed his studies in 1585, he became prefect of studies in the English College in Rome. In his capacity of prefect of studies and director of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, of which he had been a member while attending the College of Clermont, his abilities and his influence over the young were acknowledged.

In the English seminary there were at the time a large number of young men, most distinguished by the variety and brilliancy of their minds; they could not be led easily, if not by a man who gained support from all the ornaments of learning. Now this Southwell lacked neither sharpness in the quick conception of things nor soundness in judging them, nor ease of expression in explaining them clearly; and besides there was in him an innate suavity, and modesty joined with gravity, and a ceaseless striving after virtue amidst the heat of studies; and thus both in ruling the studies with authority, and in inciting souls to virtue, he bound to himself the will of every one.

Of the disposition of Robert Southwell one of his fellow religious remarked,

The good Superior gave us excellent instructions as to the method of helping and gaining souls, as did also our dear Father Southwell, who much excelled in that art, being at once prudent, pious,
meek, and exceedingly winning. 9

The letters of Southwell reveal that during his stay in the English College in Rome, he was as one awaiting and preparing for his missionary career. His was the self-imposed task of receiving and distributing the information that he received from England to France, Flanders, and southern Italy. Nor did his vocation dry up his natural affection for the family that he left in England. He wrote to Father Persons in a veiled style urging him to discover the religious position of his father and to let him know. 10

During the Roman period Southwell's literary and moral temperament were becoming clearly defined. His long stay abroad, and his detailed classical studies placed him in a difficult position as far as his native English was concerned. There is definite proof that he had command of the Latin and Italian languages. He kept in touch with the Counter-Reformation movement as might be expected since the Pope and contemporary Italian letters were also under this influence. He was in contact with the best in Italian literary thought and expression.


10 Catholic Record Society, op. cit., pp. 302-04.
Up to this point he had been living in an artificial atmosphere with the result that he was fully trained for his life work in spiritual leadership but imperfectly prepared for his literary labours.\textsuperscript{11}

From the time of his admission into the Society, Southwell always had before his eyes the goal of martyrdom. At one time he thought the most effective place to attain his end was to set off for the Indies; later, he realized that his own country needed his priestly ministrations; and there, he would have a very good chance of attaining his desire. Early in 1585 he wrote the Father General that he was ready to embark for England, but it was not until May, 1586, that he and Father Henry Garnet began their missionary journey. On July 15th they were in Calais preparing for the dangers that might confront them. From here he wrote to his friend, John Deckers, the well-known letter, "e portu."

Being now exposed to the utmost dangers, I address you, my Father, from the threshold of death, imploring the aid of your prayers that, as once you re-awakened in me the breath of life when I was so ready to die, so now by your prayers I may either escape the death of the body for further use, or endure it with courage. I am sent indeed into the midst of wolves, would that it were as a sheep to be led to the slaughter, in the name of and for Him who sends. Truly I well know that many with open mouths stand gaping for me, both on sea and land, not as wolves only, but as lions

\textsuperscript{11} Janelle, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 33.
that go about seeking whom they may devour, whose fangs I less fear than desire them; nor do I so much dread tortures, as look forward to the crown. 12

Fortunately for the missionaries the new Gregorian calendar had not as yet been adopted in England so that when they arrived on July 17, the fairs of Saint Thomas Becket were being kept. Although Walsingham had been informed of their arrival, their presence apparently passed unnoticed. To lessen the danger of discovery the Jesuits separated and, as best they could, made their way to London, from where Southwell sent to Father General Claude Aquaviva a letter dated July 25, 1586:

We have reached England after a very fortunate journey, and here have had practical experience of the intense fanaticism which animates the enemies of the truth, and of the hardly less intense fervour of the Catholics first amid swords (inter gladios) and then in prison, portents (if it be lawful to play augur) of a fate to me not unwelcome. 13

Assuming the name, "Mr. Cotton," Southwell appeared in London as a young man interested in sports. However, his memory frequently failed him when he had to remember the terms of falconry for which he pretended a great liking. 14 For the space of a few months he lived

13Catholic Record Society, op. cit., p. 308.
14Morris, op. cit., p. 44.
in concealment with Baron Vaux of Harrowden. Then he re­
placed Father Weston, who was arrested in August, 1586, 
as chaplain in the house of the Countess of Arundel, 
whose husband, Philip Howard, was imprisoned for his 
Faith. Southwell became the spiritual director of the 
household and of the Earl, who could receive letters 
even if he could not have visitors.

The disclosure of the Babington Plot made the 
Government more watchful with the result that Southwell 
had to spend much of his time in hiding. If he had to 
perform some priestly duty, he would leave the house only 
under the cover of night and in the deepest secrecy. He 
devoted himself to composing his literary works, to prayer 
and to meditation. His interest in literature made him 
appreciate his opportunity of living with the Arundels, 
who had maintained connections with those enthusiastic 
about courtly poetry. Discussions of the literary fash­
ions aided the poet in discerning how he might turn the 
secular trends to religious and didactic ends. Since he 
had learned the Jesuit plan of making classical litera­
ture the handmaid of religion, it was natural that he 
should now consider adopting this same method and make 
poetry the handmaid of religion.

When the authorities became a little less 
troublesome, the missionary, with the aid of his bene-
factress, the Countess of Arundel, "by whose liberality he maintained himself and other priests, and kept a private house wherein he usually received the Superior" and where "he kept a private printing press," became more bold in carrying out his apostolic works.¹⁵

By July 1586 there were only six Jesuits at liberty. Each had much pastoral work to do, and Southwell was more than willing to go forth into the country districts, leaving his literary work to a more opportune time. So influential was he that the Government looked forward to the time when he would be apprehended. He was determined as long as he could escape their hands "to let them know by facts that I am not taken," and "never to desist from the works of my calling, though these when done cannot long escape their notice; and they will know there still lives one of this sort whom they have not taken."¹⁶

He administered the Sacraments, sent likely subjects to seminaries abroad, encouraged other priests who were weakening, advised priests as to their behaviour, showed his tenderness by visiting the old mother of Father Per-

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

sons and administering to her. When he could meet with other Jesuits and renew his spirit with conferences, his joy knew no bounds. He did not allow the danger that stalked him daily make him follow a less well-ordered program of missionary labor, nor, on the other hand, was he foolhardy in throwing himself into danger needlessly. As early as the latter part of 1586 he experienced the searching of Catholic houses by pursuivants and relates one of his hiding-hole escapes:

Twice I was in extreme danger. The pursuivants were raging all around, and seeking me in the very house where I was lodged. I heard them threatening and breaking woodwork and sounding the wall to find hiding places; yet, by God's goodness, after four hours' search they found me not, though separated from them only by a thin partition rather than a wall. Of a truth the house was in such sort watched for many nights together that I perforce slept in my clothes in a very strait, uncomfortable place. In this wise, while we are yet free, we are trained to bear confinement. Yet in the midst of perils it is marvellous how good God is, and how bountiful of His comforts, insomuch that danger itself groweth sweet.  

In October 1591 all the Jesuits in England and some other priests met to renovate their spirit. Father Gerard tells of their narrow escape:

Next morning, about five o'clock, when Father Southwell was beginning Mass, and the others and myself were at meditation, I heard a bustle at
the house door. Directly after I heard cries and oaths poured forth against the servant for refusing admittance. The fact was that four priest-hunters, or pursuivants as they are called, with drawn swords, were trying to break down the door and force an entrance. The faithful servant withstood them, otherwise we should have been all made prisoners. But by this time Father Southwell had heard the uproar, and guessing what it meant, had at once taken off his vestments and stripped the altar; while we strove to seek out everything belonging to us, so that there might be nothing found to betray the lurking of a priest....Some therefore went and turned their beds over, so that the colder part might deceive anybody who put his hand in to feel.

At last these leopards were let in. They raged about the house, looking everywhere, and prying into the darkest corners with candles. They took four hours over the business, but failed in their search, and only brought out the forbearance of the Catholics in suffering and their own spite and obstinacy in seeking....A lady came and summoned out of the den not one but many Daniels. The hiding-place was under ground, covered with water at the bottom, so that I was standing with my feet in water all the time.18

The faint-hearted priest, Anthony Tyrrell, who had betrayed so many others to the Government "haunted greatly to spy out Father Southwell and Father Garnet, Jesuits, but could not."19

Six years is a long time to be pursued by hatred, especially, when the one pursued carries out his work with evident success. For that long period South-
well, with the help of the Catholic people, had eluded
the snares of the authorities, but at last his enemy, in
the person of Richard Topcliffe, the notorious priest-
hunter, found the means to take him.

There lived at Uxenden, near Harrow-on-the-hill,
a very devout Catholic family, the Bellamys. Anne, a
daughter of the house, was committed to the Gatehouse,
presumably for her Faith on January 26, 1592. While
there she lost both her Faith and her virtue. Topcliffe
had her married to the keeper of the Gatehouse, a man by
the name of Jones. Having taken the first downward step,
Anne continued to fall to such a degree that, in order to
secure the money she needed and which her father refused
to give her, she began to consider how she might betray
a priest into the hands of Topcliffe. Southwell, a fre­
quently visitor of the Bellamys, was to be her prey.

She arranged a meeting of her brother with the
Jesuit and had the former manage that both should travel
from London to Uxenden upon the pretense that Anne had
need of the spiritual help of Southwell. In the mean­
time, she provided Topcliffe with a plan of the Bellamy
house and its secret hiding places.

Scarcely had Father Southwell arrived when Top­
cliffe demanded admittance of Mrs. Bellamy and the giv­
ing up of the Jesuit, who by this time occupies the hid­
ieving place. Seeing that her secret had been betrayed, Mrs. Bellamy brought him forth.

As soon as Topcliffe had sight of, he offered to run at him with his rapier, urging him that he denied his priesthood. He said, "No; but," quoth he, "it is neither priest nor traitor that you seek for, but only blood, and if mine will satisfy you, you shall have it with as good a will as ever anyone's, and if mine will not satisfy, I do not doubt but you shall find many more as willing as myself, only I would advise you to remember there is a God, and He is just in His judgments, and therefore blood will have blood, but I rather wish your conversion." 20

Topcliffe then proceeded to search the house. Many things of a religious character were found; these he placed upon carts and, finally, set off with his prisoner to Westminster, where Southwell was subjected to torture in an effort to gain from him damaging evidence against Catholics. Topcliffe had sent a message to the Queen that he "did never tayke so weightye a man; if he be rightly vsed." 21 Apparently, the right handling was not successful in the first nor in the thirteenth attempt, as Father Southwell would not as much as tell the color of the horse he rode upon a certain day lest some Catholic fall into danger.


21 Topcliffe's "Letter to Queen Elizabeth, June 26, 1592" in Hood, Ibid., p. 48.
Father Southwell's sufferings were so acute that on several occasions his tormentors had to take him down from the wall as he appeared to be dying, but after reviving him by burning paper under his nose he was hung up again. Even Sir Robert Cecil was amazed at his fortitude, and the servant in attendance began to look upon him as a saint by reason of the sweetness of his expression and his patience, his only exclamations being: "My God and my all! God gave himself to thee, give thyself to God."22

For a month Father Southwell was kept in the Gatehouse, a prison so filthy that when he was brought forth, his pitiable condition moved his father to write to the Queen humbly begging:

That if his son had committed anything for which by the laws he had deserved death, he might suffer death; if not, as he was a gentleman, he hoped her Majesty would be pleased to order that he should be treated as a gentleman, and not be confined any longer in that filthy hole.23

The Queen was pleased to honor the father's petition, and the son was transferred to the Tower, where he lived in strict isolation from July 26/August 4th until he was brought to trial at his own request on February 18/28th, 1592. His father was permitted to pay for his board and lodging in the Tower and to supply him with the Bible and the works of Saint Bernard, books for which he had made request. Father Garnet succeeded in getting

22 Hood, op. cit., p. 51.
23 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
to him a Breviary, on the pages of which he had pricked the words, "Jesus" and "My God and My all." 24 From this some scholars have inferred that he wrote none of his poetry in prison.

There are many contemporary documents that describe the trial and execution of Robert Southwell. Though differing in minor details they agree that Southwell, during the trial, carried himself with dignity, deference and courtesy to Judge Popham and the Jury and made the best of his opportunity to draw the Judge and Topcliffe into argument whenever possible, mindful that his words at this time might be the means to improve conditions for Catholics and to show that his presence in England was not the treasonable thing it was depicted to be. According to Thomas Leake in his "Relation of the Martyrdom of Father Southwell," the Martyr showed himself as a loyal Englishman, loyal to the voice of his own conscience, and to the Queen in so far as she represented civil authority, but defended his stand that the Law of God must be obeyed rather than that of man. 25

The bill of indictment ran in part as follows:

Middlesex. The jury present on the part of the Queen's Majesty that whereas Robert Southwell late

24 Janelle, _op. cit._, p. 69.

25 Catholic Record Society, _op. cit._, pp. 333-37.
of London, clerk, born within this kingdom of England, to wit after the feast day of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, in the first year of the reign of her Majesty the Queen, and before the first day of May of the thirty-second year of the reign of her said Majesty the Queen, made and ordained priest by the authority derived and pretended from the See of Rome, not having the fear of God before his eyes, and little regarding the laws and statutes of this realm of England, nor anything afraid of the punishment contained in the same, on the twenty-sixth day of June of the thirty-fourth year of the reign of her said Majesty the Queen, at Uxenden in the county of Middlesex, traitorously and like a false traitor to the said Queen's Majesty, was and remained, against the form of the statute set forth and provided in such case, and against the peace of her said Majesty the Queen, her crown and dignities.

Southwell's answer was:

I confess I am a chatolick preist, and I thank God for it, but no traytour; nether can anie law make it treason to be a preist.

Anne Bellamy was the only witness against him. After her testimony that she learned from him how to equivocate, Southwell, in turn, showed that such could be lawful, the jury then withdrew. They returned in fifteen minutes with the verdict, "That Mr. Southwell was gilte of the treason in such maner and forme as was contayned in the inditment."

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27 Catholic Record Society, Leake, op. cit., p. 334.
The Judge pronounced the sentence that he should be carried to Newgate from whence he had come, and from there to be drawn to Tyburn upon an hurdle, and there to be hanged and cut down alive, his bowels to be burned before his face, his head to be stricken off, his body to be quartered and disposed of at her majesty's pleasure. Southwell received the sentence with joy, and his friends deemed themselves happy to get one glance of him. They perceived that he was full of consolation and never knew him "to looke better or more cherefully."29

On the morning of February 22/March 4 the keeper of Newgate brought his prisoner word that he was to be executed that day. As might be expected there were many to watch the martyr's death. When he was brought to Tyburn and given leave to speak, he began: "Sive vivimus, domino vivimus, sive morimur domino morimur; sive vivimus sive morimur, domini sumus." He stated again that he meant no treason to the Queen and he wished her salvation, that he was a priest of the Catholic and Roman Church, for which he thanked God, and a member of the Society of Jesus.

In the actual execution of the sentence the hangman tied a poor knot with the result that Southwell

29 Ibid., p. 83.
did not die immediately. The populace would not let him be cut down until he was dead, nor would they cry out, "Traitor!" when his heart was exposed to their gaze.

In a beautiful passage Pierre Janelle concludes his research relating to Robert Southwell; since this writer has drawn heavily from Janelle, it is fitting to close this chapter with his testimony:

And in the midst of that huge welter of conflicting thought and purpose, unmindful of possible misunderstandings, conscious of the perfect singleness and purity of his aims, Southwell serenely pursued his way; an Englishman fully, and a Jesuit no less fully; a gentleman and a sportsman both in the proper and figurative senses of the words; keenly alive to the slur put upon his name, in the eyes of the world, by the imputation of treason and the infamous punishment thereon following; ardently loyal to his Queen and country, to whom he wished the highest blessings that man's soul could receive; yet with his insular pride, his northern ruggedness, softened down and tempered by a southern influence, by the refinement and courtesy of Italy, by the virile humility which was the ideal of Ignatius and his disciples; so that when he faced death, no overweening self-confidence was noticeable in him; but to the last he prayed that his frailty might be assisted, and with a child's trust in God's fatherly help, sank into death as a child might sink into sleep, "looking most cheerfully."30

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30 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
CHAPTER II

ROBERT SOUTHWELL THE POET

That Robert Southwell be understood fully his work must be treated independently of other poets, for, according to one Elizabethan scholar, that is the only way to arrive at an appreciation of the old poets. ¹ He was as loyal an Englishman as drew breath in those days of difficult breathing for Jesuits and Catholics. As one of the persecuted minority, he could not watch unmoved his countrymen, following their political leaders travelling in the general direction to God on a bypath of their own choice. He had to do something to reclaim his contemporaries, treading gaily the "mazes of sixteenth century commotion," from their precarious situation.²

Scholars find in the prodigality of Elizabethan lyricism a phase in the progress of the development of the language and literature; to Southwell, the popularity of the lyric was an effective means that he would utilize to stem the onrush of vitiating, insincere love poetry and to direct other poets to a more meaningful


use of their gifts. He did not consider poetry the highest form of literature, but, because of its impact upon the morals of the day, he was willing to use its form not so much "to teach and to delight" as to teach more than delight. Fortunately, he was a true poet, though a minor one, and his didactic aims did not overshadow the lovely expressions of his beautiful thought.

To be termed a minor poet does not mean necessarily that the individual has not the command of his gifts, but it does aid in distinguishing a lower from a higher order in the hierarchy of classification in the realm of art. The writers of minor poetry take a comparatively simple view of events, considering them on a single level of perception. Major poets, on the other hand, include in their works "the whole experience of man, his intellectual triumphs, his emotional defeats, his aspirations and the crushing weight of reality....forged into unified aesthetic experiences." The minor poet may invest certain experiences with a glamour that tends to make life happy and exciting, but the major poet reconciles the ills of life by showing that they are an inevitable part of experience, implicated in the good of life.

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However, both great and minor poets in raising issues must also realize them.  

The following quotation serves to clarify the distinction between a major and a minor poet and, by implication, reinforces the assertion that Southwell's contribution although of minor import must not, for that reason, be considered of no import.

What makes a Milton or a Shakespeare or a Goethe great is the fact that he could create an object of cultural value that was universal, and was universal because it was adapted to fit forever into a world-scheme; he has not interest at all in creating an object in which individual men were to find accomplished and realized their petty personal whims which they mistake for purposes. And yet, because he looked over the heads of men to the destiny of man, every object he touched has become a guidepost to every man, pointing out to him his true destiny and at the same time satisfying his individual motives in so far as they could claim to be legitimate. Each was great because he created an object contributory to the freedom of man, not to the freedoms of men; an object therefore that was to be henceforth an integral part of the universe for all men that were to follow, and that would stand as representing the universal by which all men could thereafter shape their individual activities. In other words, they all laid down, in terms of the qualities and characters of the objects they created, the moral principles that defined a world and set its limits, and thus the bounds within which individual action would find its highest perfection. It is to be emphasized throughout

\[\text{Ibid., p. 130.}\]
that the essence of a moral relation is the fact that it connects a detail or type of detail of the world with the whole world itself and thereby endows the detail with the significance of the universal.  

Having distinguished between major and minor poetry for the purpose of showing that Southwell's contribution to lyric poetry is important, it may now be shown that his criticism of contemporary poetry, although not of the scholarly magnitude of Sir Philip Sidney's "Defense of Poetry" is of the utmost value, for in knowing his attitude toward the lyrical poetry of his day and the aims he had in writing, a greater appreciation and deeper insight into his poetry will be acquired. Close affinity in the expression of their ideas makes the comparison of Sidney's "An Apology for Poetry" and Southwell's "Preface to Saint Peter's Complaint" an interesting study. Both criticisms were published in 1595 after the deaths of their respective authors.

In summing up the imputations against the poets Sidney writes:

Now then go we to the most important imputations laid to the poor poets; for aught I can yet learn, they are these: first, that there being many other

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more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them, than in this. Secondly that it is the mother of lies. Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires; with a siren's sweetness, drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancy.8

Southwell also bewails the shortcomings of the poets but a shade more sharply:

Poets, by abusing their talent, and making the follies and faynings of love the customary subject of their base endeavours, have so discredited this facultie, that a poet, a lover, and a lyer, are by many reckoned but three words of one signification.9

Southwell does not try to minimize or soften the charges leveled against poets; Sidney, on the contrary, extenuates the imputations by showing that poets do not monopolize the tendency to misrepresent matters. Says he, "physicians lie, when they aver things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of souls drowned in a potion before they come to his ferry."10

Both maintain in spite of popular opinion that

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10Sidney, op. cit., p. 35.
poetry does not abuse man's wit, but "that man's wit abuseth poetry." 11

Southwell could take neither a light-hearted nor a universal, impersonal attitude toward the situation, but with the earnestness befitting his serious outlook cited arguments from Christian tradition to set forth the depraved status of current poetry.

But the vanitie of men cannot counterpoyse the authority of God, Who delievering many parts of Scripture in verse, and, by His Apostle willing vs to exercise our deuotion in hymnes and spiri­tual sonnets, warranteth the art to be good, and the use allowable. And therefore not onley among the heathen, whose gods were chiefly canonized by their poets, and their paynim diuinitie oracled, in verse, but even in the Olde and Newe Testament, it hath beene vsed by men of greatest piety, in matters of most deuotion. Christ Himselfe, by making a hymne the conclusion of His Last Supper and the prologue to the first pageant of His Pas­sion, gaue His Spouse a methode to imitate, as in the office of the Church, it appeareth; and to all men a patterne, to know the true use of this measured and footed stile. 12

Sidney expresses the same idea about the usefulness of poetry, but he takes a broader and most scholarly attitude in regard to the importance of poetry in literature:

Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word "mimesis," that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a

11 Ibid., p. 37.
12 Southwell, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
speaking picture: with this end, to teach and de-
light; of this have been three several kinds. The
chief both in antiquity and excellency, were they
that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of
God. Such were David in his psalms, Solomon in
his Song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes and Proverbs;
Moses and Deborah, in their hymns, and the writer
of Job; which beside others, the learned Emanuel
Tremilius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the
poetical part of Scripture. Against these none
will speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due holy
reverence.13

After showing that God ordained a worthy use
for poetry, Southwell draws certain conclusions that
state the reasons for his turning to the writing of verse:

But the deuil...hath possessed also most poets
with his idle fancies...For in lieu of solemn and
devout matter, to which in duety they owe their abil-
ities, they now busie themselves in expressing such
passions as onely serue for testimonies to what un-
worthy affections they have wedded their will. And,
because the best course to let them see the error
of their works is to weave a new webbe in their own
loom, I haue heere laide a few course threads to-
gether, to invite some skilfuller wits to goe for-
ward in the same, or to begin some finer peeces;
wherein it may be seen how well verse and vertue
sute together.14

"In their owne loome" states Southwell's posi-
tion in regard to the form of his poetry. He is not
planning on startling the world with any new style of
expression, but he does intend to use a new subject mat-
ter, religion. From his high aim he never deviated and
so became "the founder of the modern English style of

13Sidney, op. cit., p. 9.
14Southwell, op. cit., p. 4.
religious poetry, being the first Englishman who showed "how well verse and virtue suit together." He had taken upon himself to challenge the poets of his day. To lead them to his way of thinking he had to accept their models and these he found in the very popular miscellanies. From them he chose what suited his purpose without setting himself up as a great poet or forcing himself to experiment with all the forms that were available.

It was probably from Songs and Sonnets, the first printed collection of a high quality commonplace book, published by Richard Tottel in June 1557, that Robert Southwell learned the type of "loome" upon which poets wove their songs. Tottel's Miscellany quickly caught the popular fancy and held its own through the next twenty years until Spenser's Shepheardes Calender introduced another phase in the progress of English poetry. From a study of Southwell's poetry the writer has concluded that he was not influenced by Spenser.

Besides Tottel's Miscellany which gathered the best "lyrical and reflective poetry produced during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Queen Mary and ....kept its popularity throughout the reign of Eliz-

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15John O'Kane Murray, Lessons in English Literature (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1884), p. 141.
abeth;" there were other collections to which he could have had access: The Paradise of Dainty Devices (1576), an immensely popular collection and more serious than Tottel's; Flowers of Epigrams (1577), containing many translations; A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions (1578), a book of inferior quality.16

Southwell accepted the externals of Elizabethan lyrical poetry: the ornamental language, imitation of French and Italian models, conceits, alliteration, paradoxes, quaint figures of speech, excessive word play, inversions of word order, and poulter's measure:

A favourite metre of Surrey—a metre used now and then by Wyatt, too—is one of which the student of this period may grow tired as he traces its decadence through Turberville, Googe and others, to its brief restoration to honour in the hands of Southwell. It was of English origin, being probably, a development of the ballad quatrains, and was commonly called "poulter's measure," from the dozen of eggs that varied then, between twelve and fourteen.17

For the chivalric love ideal Southwell substituted the theme of the love of God and His Mother; in lieu of the Neo-Platonic philosophy he offered


themes of remorse, a lyric-sequence of meditations upon Gospel incidents, poetic considerations of life, death, eternity, and a translation. He also demonstrated how a poem, "My Mind to Me My Kingdom Is," by a popular poet, Edward Dyer, could be parodied to serve religious ends in his poem, "Content and Ritche."

Throughout his fifty-seven poems his adherence to the earlier forms in Elizabethan poetry and especially his fondness for poulter's measure show an independence of the literary influences of the moment (save for the one matter of "conceit") that discloses how deeply that faithful priest and true poet was immersed in the mission that brought him undeservedly to the traitor's scaffold.

As a result of his faithfulness to his ideal, Southwell has been acclaimed "the best Catholic poet of Elizabethan time."

Nor should that title be regarded lightly, for he, more than any other writer of the day, represented not the new national life, nor the new religion, nor the new politics, but the "despairing strug-

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gle of the old faith against the new."^20

"Saint Peter's Complaint," the first, the longest, and not the best result of the poet's challenge to his contemporaries, holds a place of importance in the literature of England because through it, Southwell, influenced by the Italian, Luigi Tansillo's "Lagrima di San Pietro, introduced the theme of tearful repentance into England. So successful was "Saint Peter's Complaint" that Southwell's contemporaries, including Queen Elizabeth, men of letters, and the pious populace, perused his work curiously, searchingly or devotedly as individual bent dictated.21 Many rhymers imitated the new fashion with "Tears" of various descriptions.22

The "Complaint" is a long spiritual poem of 132 stanzas, each containing six decasyllabic lines, rhyming ababcc (the same stanzaic form of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis") and embodies the "few course threads" that Southwell would lay on the old loom. For theme it has the remorse of Saint Peter for having denied his Master. According to James Russell Lowell, it was "a drawl


through thirty pages of maudlin repentance." As will be discussed in the next chapter, Lowell's judgment was, perhaps, too hasty and lacking in spiritual insight. However, it does express a probably first reaction to Peter's intense remorse.

The "everlasting matter" and the "endless alphabet" of the following stanza are not merely exaggerated expressions but the introductory phrases to a lengthy moan that irritated Lowell as "maudlin."

Sad subject of my sinne hath stoard my minde,
With everlasting matter of complaint;
My thrones an endless alphabet doe finde,
Beyond the pangs which Ieremie doth paint.
That eyes with errors may just measure keepe,
Most teares I wish, that have most cause to wepe.

Alexander B. Grosart, the editor of Southwell's poems and his sympathetic biographer, regretted Lowell's harsh judgment and countered with the following:

...with admitted tedium, Saint Peter's Complaint sounds depths of penitence and remorse, and utters out emotion that flames into passion very unforgetable, while there are felicities of metaphor, daintiness of word-painting, brilliancies of inner-portraiture scarcely to be matched in contemporary Verse.


A more moderate criticism than either Lowell's or Grosart's is expressed by W. J. Courthope when he writes, "The unprejudiced reader will find in Southwell a mirror of genuine emotion, without any attempt at wit for wit's sake." His comment is more convincing, for Southwell surprises the sympathetic reader with frequent and lovely passages of which the following is an example:

\[
\text{Weep Balme and myrrhe, you sweet Arabian trees,}
\text{With purest gummes perfume and pearle your ryne;}
\text{Shed on your honey-drops, you busie bees;}
\text{I barraine plant, must weep vnpleasant bryne;}
\text{Hornets I hyue, salt drops their labour pyles,}
\text{Suckt out of sinne, and shed by showring eyes.}
\]

(lxxxl)

In the two following stanzas may be seen the tendency of Southwell in his earlier and more didactic period to the excessive use of conceits and alliteration for the sake of showing, apparently, his facility in the use of Euphuistic techniques rather than for any other reason.

Sharpe was the weather in that stormie place,
Best suting hearts benum'd with hellish frost,
Whose crusted malice could admitte no grace;
Where coales were kindled to the warmers' cost;
Where feare my thoughts canded with ysie cold,
Heate did my tongue to periuries vnfold.

(xlili)

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If love, if losse, if fault, if spotted fame,
   If danger, death, if wrath, or wreck of weal,
Entitle eyes true heyres to earned blame,
    That due remorse in such events conceal
Then want of tears might well enroll my name,
As chiefest saint in calendar of shame. (lxxiii)

In the shorter lyrics that make up the Maeoniae and Myrtae Southwell more truly expresses himself as the outstanding Catholic poet of Elizabethan times. Had the poems of Melofolia not been published there would have been scant loss to Southwell's reputation or the understanding of the complete development of the English lyric. In the former collections he shows himself to be the master of older lyrical forms of expression and the dictator of a new trend in subject matter, which leads the thoughtful reader to a mystical knowledge of God.

Southwell does not employ many metres or rhyme schemes in the writing of his poems. The stanzaic form that he uses most frequently is the six-line, usually decasyllabic, rhyming ababcc. This occurs in "Saint Peter's Complaint," and in thirty-five poems of Myrtae, Maeoniae, and Melofolia. Poulter's measure he uses thirteen times throughout his poetic works; the stanza rhyming abab he employs seven times if one accepts the sixteen-syllable line of "The Virgin Mary to Christ on the Crosse" as two lines; the translation of Lauda Sion,
"Saint Thomas of Aquines Hymne read on Corpus Christy Daye," is rhymed aabccdd; in only one instance does he use the couplet.

Although he used the aabcc stanza most frequently, he is recognized as having used the poulter's measure more brilliantly than any of his contemporaries. In using the former stanza he appears more definitely the teacher; in the latter, the poet. As a teacher he draws attention to the fact that God's Providence encompasses all things, and multiplies expressions of this truth in the poem, "Scorne Not the Leaste."

The merlen cannot ever sore on highe,
Nor greedy grayhounde still pursue the chase;
The tender larke will finde a tyme to flye,
The fearfull hare to runne a quiet race.
He that high grouth on cedars did bestowe,
Gave also lowly mushrumpes leave to growe.26

In a number of poems he would teach men that the things that the Elizabethans accepted as important concepts were of an ephemeral nature; of Fortune, he says:

Like tigre fugitive from the ambitious,
Like weeping crocodile to scornefull enimies,
Suyng for amity where she is odious,
But to her followers forswearing courtesies.

No wynde so changeable, no sea so waveringe,
As giddy fortune in reeling varietyes;
Nowe madd, now mercifull, now ferc, now favoring,
In all thinges mutable but mutabilities.27

26Southwell, op. cit., p. 69.
27Ibid., p. 68.
In "Content and Ritche" he turns the attention of the Renaissance man from contemplation of his own intellectual powers as a basis of ultimate good to a consideration of "Vertue" as the criterion of true worth.

I dwell in Grace's courts,
   Enrichd with Vertue's rightes;
Faith guides my will; Love leads my will
   Hope all my mynde delightes.

My wishes are but few
   All easye to fulfill,
I make the lymits of my poure
   The bounds until my will.

I clipp high-clyming thoughtes;
   The winges of swelling pride;
Their fall is worst, that from the heygth
   Of greatest honours slyde. 28

"Of the follies and faynings of loue" Southwell offers "Love's Servile Lott," "Love's Gardyne Greife," and "Lew Love is Losse." On this popular theme he has nothing cheerful to offer; from the first mentioned poem an example will be cited, for his attitude is the same whenever he reverts to earthly love.

Love is mistres of many myndes,
   Yet fewe know whome they serve;
They reckon least how little love
   Their service doth deserve.

28Ibid., pp. 72-73.
The will she robbeth from the witt,
The sence from reason’s lore;
She is delightfull in the ryne,
Corrupted in the core.

She shroudeth Vice in Vertue’s vayle
Pretendinge good in ill;
She offreth joy, affordeth greife;
A kisse, where she doth kill.

May never was the month of love,
For May is full of floures;
But rather Aprill, wett by kinde,
For love is full of showers.

Repeatedly, does the longing of his soul find
expression in poems dealing with the anguish that he
must endure because Death will not come and unite him
to God. For this reason he has been termed “the singer
of Death.”

By force I live, in will I wish to dye;
In playnte I passe the length of lingring dayes;
Free would my soule from mortall body flye,
And tredd the track of death’s desyred waies;
Life is but losse where death is deemed gaine,
And loathed pleasures, breed displeasinge payne.

Come, cruell death, why lingrest thou so longe?
What doth withould thy dynte from fatall stroke?
Nowe prest I am, alas! thou dost me wrong;
To lett me live, more anger to provoke;
The right is had when thou hast stopt my breathe,
Why shouldst thoue stay to worke my dooble deathe?

Where life is lov’d, thou ready art to kill,
And to abridge the sodayne pangues their joy;
Where life is loath’d thou wilt not worke their

29Ibid., pp 78-79.
But dost adjorne their death to their annoy\©.
To some thou art a feirc\© unbidden guest,
But those that crave thy helpe thou helpest lest.30

Southwell, the teacher of poets, was not content
to direct his disciples to the sources of poetic ideas;
he showed them in a charming sequence of lyrics on the
lives of Christ and His Mother how to utilize the Gospel
for their own singing. Of these, one of the loveliest
is "The Visitation."

Proclaymed queene and mother of a God,
The light of Earth, the soveraigne of saintes,
With pilgrim\© foot\© upp tyring hills she trott,
And heavenly stile with handmayd\© toyle acquaints:
Her youth to age, her helth to sicke she lends,
Her hart to God, to neighbour hand she bendes.

A prince she is, and mightier prince doth beare,
Yet pompe of princely trayne she would not have;
But doubtles heavenly quires attendant were,
Her child from harme, her self from fall to same:
Word to the voyce, songe to the tune she bringes,
The voyce her word, the tune her ditys singes.

Eternall lightes enclosed in her breste
Shott out such percing beames of burning love,
That when her voyce her cosen\©s cares possest
The force thereof did force her babe to move:
With secret signes the children greet\© each other,
But open praise ech leaveth to his mother.31

Robert Southwell had set out to teach other
poets how they might "weave a new webbe in their owne
loome," and he made the new subject matter pleasant and
popular; soon other singers were singing of the Provid-
dence of God, the necessity of doing penance for personal

30Ibid., pp. 81-83.
31Ibid., pp. 126-27.
sin, the utility of contemplation of the incidents of the Gospel as an antidote for the stifling worldliness of Renaissance maxims, and the contentment that followed upon virtuous living. In him the poet and the teacher could not be separated, and in a few of his poems the teacher is forgotten and there remains only exquisite song about a "sely tender babe." The poet invites in "New Prince, New Pompe,"

Behould a sely tender Babe,
In freesing winter nights,
In homely manger trembling lies:
Alas, a pitious sights!

The inns are full, no man will yelde
This little pilgrime bedd;
But forci'd He is with sely beastes
In cribb to shroude His headd.

Waye not His cribb, His wodden dishe,
Nor beastes that by Him feede;
Way not His mother's poore attire,
Nor Joseph's simple weede.

With joy approach, 0 christian wighte;
Do homage to thy Kings;
And highly prise His humble pompe
Which He from heaven doth bringe.32

True and beautiful is the lyric that follows. Again it hymns the Christ Child in unforgettable loveliness and is titled, "A Child My Choyse."

Lett folly praise that phancy loves, I praise and love that Childe

32 Ibid., pp. 107-08.
Whose hart no thought, whose tongue no word, whose hand no deed defil'de.
I praise Him most, I love Him best, all prays and love is His;
While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot lyve amisse.
Love's sweetest mark, lavde's highest theme, man's most desired light,
To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live in Him delight.
He myne by gift, I His by debt, thus ech to other dewe,
First frende He was, best frende He is, all tymes will try Him trewe.
Though yonge, yet wise, though small, yet stronge; though man, yet God He is;
As wise He knowes, as stronge He can, as God He loves to blisse.
His knowledge rules, His strength defendes, His love doth cherish all;
His birth our joy, His life our light, His death our end of thrall.
Alas! He weeps, He sighes, He pantes, yet do His angells singe;
Out of His teares, His sighes and throbbs, doth bud a joyful springe.
Almighty Babe, Whose tender armes can force all foes to flye,
Correct my faultes, protect my life, direct me when I dye.

The best lyric, however, and the best known of all Southwell's poems, is the "Burning Babe". In intensity of feeling it is almost unique among his lyrics, and in metrical form it represents probably the finest use of the septenary in the whole Elizabethan period.

In every anthology that recognizes Southwell's work the rapturous "Burning Babe" is invariably included.

33Ibid., pp. 70-71.
have been willing to destroy much of his own poetry if he
could have been the writer of "The Burning Babe."\(^{35}\) Al­
though it must appear later in this thesis, the writer
feels like George Saintsbury that unquestionably it is
the best and "though fairly well-known, must be given,\(^{36}\)

As I in hoary Winter's night stood shivering in
the snowe,
Surpris'd I was with sodayne heat, which made my
heart to glowe;
And liftinge upp a fearefull eye to vewe what fire
was here,
A pretty Babe all burninge bright, did in the ayre
appear,
Who scorched with excessive heate, such floodes of
tears did shed,
As though His floodes should quench His flames
which with His teares were fed;
Alas! quoth He, but newly borne, in fiery heats
I frye,
Yet none approch to warme their heartes or feele
my fire but I!
My faultles brest the fornace is, the fuell wound­
inge thornes,
Love is the fire, and sighes the smoke, the ashes
shame and scornes;
The fuell Justice layeth on, and Mercy blowes the
coales,
The mettall in this fornace wrought are men's de­
filed soules,
For which, as nowe on fire I am, to worke them to
their good,
So will I melt into a bath to washe them in My
bloode.
With this He vanisht out of sight, and swiftly
shroncke awaye,
And straight I called unto mynde that it was
Christ mas-daye.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\)Notes of Ben Jonson's Conversations with Wil­
liam Drummond (London: Printed for the Shakespeare's

\(^{36}\)George S intsbury, A History of Elizabethan
Literature (London: Macmillan and Company, 1891), III,
119.

From the foregoing study the following conclusions have been reached regarding the status of Robert Southwell as a poet. He was an important though minor literary figure of Elizabethan days. His writings make for a deeper appreciation of both the major and minor poets of that period. His avowed purpose in writing poetry was not primarily to delight his readers but to draw them to the consideration of eternal values, to show poets how they might use their gifts, not merely to delight men with the insincere singing of profane love, but to urge them to more virtuous living.

Southwell was not fanatical in hurling charges against the poets of his day, for Sir Philip Sidney, the chief critic of the times, likewise presses the poets to re-value their responsibilities.

The forms for his poetry are neither varied nor original. He apparently chose from the miscellanies the popular modes usually employed for the singing of profane love; on these he sang new songs of Divine Love. Because of his persevering adherence to his stated purpose, he is acclaimed the founder of the modern English style of religious poetry. He used the poulter's measure more brilliantly than any other poet.

His is the unique contribution of introducing
into English literature the theme of tearful repentance, although he borrowed the idea from the Italian, Tansillo, he surpassed him in its artistic and original expression. Important as "Saint Peter's Complaint" is for its impact on literature, it is not the best of Southwell's poetry.

In the collections of short lyrics, *Masoniae*, and *Myrtæ*, the most artistic creations of the poet are to be found. He would impress his contemporaries that the standards of the world are to be replaced with eternal values. Death is a favorite theme of his because it is the means through which he may be united to God. So tender is his singing of the Christ Child that he may be called the poet of the Childhood of Christ. While he sings of the Christ Child the poet who set out to teach more than to delight withdraws, and the mystic poet of the Elizabethans emerges to tantalize the reader to discover his mystic adventure that culminated so ecstatically in the contemplation of "The Burning Babe."
Because of the confusion that exists today when the terms "contemplation" and "mysticism" are used, both in regard to their signification in religion and in literature, it is necessary to define both terms as they will be used in this work. Contemplation is a perception of God or of divine things proceeding from love and tending to love.¹

Mysticism is the experimental knowledge of the loving soul with the loving God.² When a soul reaches out to God in prayer, it performs a mystical act, for without God the soul could not so much as utter the name of Jesus.³

It [mysticism] is the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God; the achievement here and now of the immortal heritage of man. Or, if you like it better, it is the art of establishing his con-


³I Cor. xxii:3
sious relation with the Absolute, an ordered movement towards ever higher levels of reality, ever closer identification with the Infinite.

The potentiality for mystical experiences is made possible for the soul at baptism when the Holy Spirit takes possession of it with His theological gifts of Faith, Hope and Charity. If the soul remains faithful to these gifts as it progresses through life, it will eventually arrive at a deep union with God in this life and be rewarded with the Beatific Vision hereafter. Unfortunately, the soul finds itself in combat with the adverse spirit of the world, the flesh and the devil. Soon it will know sin, either mortal or venial, but it will also learn that God is willing to forgive sin as often as it turns to Him in sorrow.

Once a soul, compelled by the love of God, has determined to break forever with sin and sets itself perseveringly to seek God with all spiritual powers, it is said to have entered upon the way of purgation, the first stage that leads to perfection in the spiritual life. Despite relapses the will must remain fixed on the end to be attained. While uprooting sin and vice steadfastly, and avoiding new sins, the soul becomes purified and is restored to its baptismal splendor.

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Sin having been removed through purgation, the soul enters the way of illumination:

...its main characteristic is ordinarily the acquisition and practice of virtues...the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, the infused moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.\(^5\)

Through its increasingly ardent love of God the soul is drawn at last into the way of union, characterized by a very high degree of practically uninterrupted mental prayer. In any one stage, however, there will be the presence of the others.

The spiritual man grows all together; no one part of him after another, as one might say the lower limbs first, and then after a while the trunk, and only ultimately the head. No, every part of him is there from the beginning, proportionately small, of course, and every part grows harmoniously with the others, just as the hands and feet and brain and heart of a child will grow with the rest of his body.\(^6\)

Such is the barest outline of the mystical way as it is traditionally held in the Church from the time of the Apostles and down through the present age. The notion that something new had been added to the concept of the mystical act of prayer in the sixteenth century has long been maintained. However, that is not the case, for the Trentine Reform emphasized, as the earl-

\(^5\) Louismet, op. cit., p. 20.
\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 20-21.
ier divines had done, interior religion as "opposed to
the abuses of purely outward practice." Both the later
medieval mystics and the Christian humanists sought un-
ion with God through personal sanctification and by so
doing paved the way for the spiritual leaders of the
Catholic Reform.

All the schools were agreed in stressing the
fact that the mystical life and moral life are
intimately related, that there are no raptures
independent from righteous conduct, and that
mere emotion and feeling are to be distrusted
and avoided; that acts of virtue are the due
preparation for mystical experiences, no less
than their immediate consequence; that ecstasies
are a gratuitous gift from God, not to be strain-
ed after, but only accepted when they come, and
that in their absence, and in states of spiri-
tual drouth, the only thing to do is to perse-
vere in utter compliance with God's behests;
that though love of God be at the root of all
spiritual life, such love is not so much mani-
fested by motions of the heart, as by the ex-
ercise of the obedient will.

Saint Ignatius was accredited in an especial
manner with injecting the spirit of the Renaissance
into the spiritual life.

To speak the truth, we do not see too clearly,
how this spirit could have got so far as to
reach the author of the Exercises at the time
he was writing his little book. He knew no other
language than Castilian, and his reading had been
confined to the tales of romantic chivalry. His
first contact with the Renaissance, in the per-
son of Erasmus, was in fact a disappointment.

8Ibid., p. 250.
Those who introduced him to the intellectual life were men of the Middle Ages, the Benedictines of Montserrat, the Dominicans of Manresa, or the rue Saint-Jacques at Paris. Through them he had drawn heavily on tradition if we wish to judge him with historical accuracy.

The obsession of Saint Ignatius was the "Greater Glory of God" and to attain this end all else was bent, work, word, prayer life, even sanctity itself; by its single standard everything in life was measured, and rigidly allotted its value and place. For it, and for it alone, this world and man in it were fashioned; so long as it was promoted, it mattered little what else was done or how man fared.

Neither the prayer of contemplation nor the action of good works received a superior position in the hierarchy of his values. When his disciple, led by the desire to love God, was willing to prove his words of love by deeds, then was he truly the knight of Christ, possessed with a perfect liberty of spirit and a useful instrument to win souls for the Kingdom of God. Love for Saint Ignatius was an all-consuming fire that demanded action rather than words. He was not satisfied

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that love burn all within himself, but it must also burn all within all others that God might be glorified. To accomplish his end he gave great freedom to the members of his Society demanding only that the emphasis be placed on the inner discipline of the individual rather than upon external observances.

Saint Ignatius did not write a book on prayer as such; to know his mind on prayer it is necessary to look to *The Spiritual Exercises*, the Constitution, his letters, notes on prayer, and the teachings of others. From these sources it is gathered that for him prayer was the root of everything: "So great an attraction had it for him that he had to use violence to himself to keep himself away when duty called." Father Goodier\(^{11}\) notes further:

As we have seen it was by means of prayer and meditation and contemplation that he sought to develop in the man he formed, the three essentials, self-conquest, interior sincerity, love. When he had completed his formation, and the fully-trained man was sent out to do his work, it was assumed that he would need no further instruction. When he speaks of such as these in his Constitution he simply says that "he assumes for certain that they will be spiritual men, and that they will

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp. 42-43. In the use of the word "run" it is interesting to note that St. Benedict of Nursia, a thousand years before Ignatius, promised to his disciples in the Prologue to his Rule, "But as we advance in the religious life and faith, we shall run the way of God's commandments with expanded hearts and unspeakable sweetness of love." *Rule of St. Benedict* (Atchison: Abbey Student Press, 1912), p. 8.
have made such progress in the way of Christ Our Lord that they run along it."

Polanco, his secretary, expressed the thought of the Saint in the following excerpt from a letter:

Students cannot give themselves to long meditations. But they can practise seeking the presence of God in all things, in conversation, walking, sight, taste, hearing, understanding, in everything they do. And this method of prayer, which finds God in everything, is easier than that which compels us to rise to more abstract ideas concerning Him when we strain to make them present to us. This excellent exercise, if we are careful to make it with due preparation, will win for us from our Lord visitations of deep moment; even though our time of prayer be not long.  

The Jesuit saints from Saint Ignatius on were acquainted with all degrees of prayer:

They are familiar with the purgative, the illuminative, the contemplative ways. Saints of prayer may seek their counsel, witness St. Theresa, St. Francis de Sales, St. Margaret Mary. But always they have in mind the further end, the perfection and use of the instrument for the greater glory of God and the greater good of men. If in any way the prayer of the Society of Jesus differs from any other, it is simply in this, subordination of its practice to what it conceives to be the greater end in view.

Robert Southwell embodied in a remarkable manner the ideals of Saint Ignatius. When he arrived in England after his ordination to the priesthood and the completion of his training in the Society, he was

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12 Ibid., pp. 43-44.
13 Ibid., p. 48.
the spiritual man according to the mind of the Founder of the Society of Jesus.

By prayer Southwell was strengthened and consoled and enlightened as to the form that his apostolic zeal should take. One of the outcomes of his union with God was the religious nature of all his poetry. In keeping with the tradition of mystical prayer of which he is an outstanding representative in the sixteenth century, he has written three poems that bear upon this matter. His advice in "A Preparatiue to Prayer" contains scarcely veiled reference to mystical prayer. The first five lines readily refer to the state of purgation:

When thou doest talke with God, by prayer I meanes,
   Lift vp pure hands, lay downe all Lust's desires:
Fix thoughts on heauen, present a conscience cleane:
   Such holy balme, to mercie's throne aspires,
Confesse faults' guilt, craue pardon for thy sinne:

In the three following lines the prayer of illumination is touched upon:

Tread holy paths, call grace to guide therein,
It is the spirit with reverence must obey
   Our Maker's will, to practise what He taught;

In the third stanza of the poem he shows the detachment that a soul must practice to mount to God:

Euen as Elias, mounting to the skie,
   Did cast his mantle to the Earth behind:
So, when the heart presents the prayer on high
   Exclude the world from traffike with the mind.
In the last stanza he refers to the stage of union which consists essentially in the union of man's will with the will of God:

Like Abraham, ascending up that hill
To sacrifice; his servants left below
That he might act the great Commander's will,
Without impeach to his obedient blow;
Euen so the soule, remote from earthly things;
Should mount salvation's shelter, Mercie's wings.14

He concludes "Ensamples of our Savior," the third poem concerned with prayer with the weighty couplet:

And, as the soule life to the body glues,
So prayer reunies the soule, by prayer it liues.15

When one considers the training of the poet, the hostility of the English Government to Jesuits in 1586, Southwell's personal appreciation of the necessity of prayer, it is not too surprising that he incorporated into his works many of the degrees mentioned by Abbot Cisneros, an influential writer on prayer at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In fact, unless the long "Saint Peter's Complaint" is examined with some notion of its structural form, one might be tempted to agree with Lowell's pronouncement of its being a drawl of maudlin repentance.

14 Southwell, op. cit., pp. 185-86.
15 Ibid., p. 188.
Viewed in the light of the degrees of prayer of purgation, "Saint Peter's Complaint" is a unified piece of art that Southwell intended and not, as some critics have adjudged it, a series of disconnected poems.

There are three elements found in the state of purgation: the first, remembrance of past sins includes imploring the Mercy of God with tears, humbling of self for former pride so that Divine Pity may fall upon it, making satisfaction to the Creator for having chosen creature delights rather than the Creator; the second, compunction in which the soul grieves that it has lost the friendship of God, despised His goodness, consented to sin, lived in sin, ceased to fear God, presumed to commit such great and horrible sins against God, sighing and groaning with all its strength so that it will be more inclined to contrition and devotion; the third, elevative, the lifting up of the soul in hope, praising God for His greatness, nobility, goodness, beauty, sweetness and mercy. To assist the soul in its purification it is recommended that it call upon the Virgin Mother and the Saints for their intercession.16

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Surpassing its Italian predecessor, "Lagrima," by Tansillo in spiritual depth and meditative reflectiveness, "Saint Peter's Complaint" in a beautiful progression from the first element of remembrance in the purgative way to the third element of hope, translates the whole gamut of feeling that accompanies the remorse of a soul that has uttered words of love to God, but when given the opportunity to prove them, fails through cowardice and is hurtled into sin.

Saint Peter, the speaker, settles down in a leisurely manner to bemoan his past. In the stanzas i-viii he invites his soul to go forth as a ship "into a maine of teares" to begin to bewail his crime of having denied Christ. The imagery of the sea creates a mood of onrush ing waves, rising and falling with ever increasing impetuosity and intensity. Now and then a stanza of apparent calm is but the prelude to a consideration that, though beginning in joy, will lead ultimately to a poignant recollection of his infidelity. The first degree of the element of remembrance is stated in the lines that announce the subject matter of the whole poem:

Sad subject of my sinne hath stoard my minde
With everlasting matter of complaint;

(vii)

In a series of pointed questions in stanzas x to xxx he demands answers of himself with the result that he descends lower and lower in his own estimation:

And could I rate so high a life so base?
Did fear with love cast so uneven account,
That for this goal I should run Judas’ race,
And Caiphas’ rage in crueltie surmount?
Yet they esteemed thirtie pence His price;
I, worse then both, for nought denyd Him thrice.

Was this for best deserts that duest meede?
Are highest worths well wag’d with spitefull hire?
Are stoutest vowes repeal’d in greatest neede?
Should friendship, at the first affront, retire?
Blush, crauen sot, lurke in eternall night;
Crouch in the darkest caves from loathed light.

The reflection on the joy that was his when he basked in his Master’s favor sets off a new wave of sorrow:

In Thabor’s ioyes I eger was to dwell;
An earnest friend while pleasures’ light did shine,

And now my mouth hath thrise His name defil’d,
That cry’d so loud three dwellings there to builde.

From stanza xxx to stanza lvi Peter tries to find something to condone his crime, but in vain. Each item in his downfall is judged in its turn. He is especially ashamed that he was overcome by a woman:

Yet woman’s words did giue me murdring knocks.

But I, on whom all infamies must light,
Was hist to death with words of woman’s spight.
I quailed at words that neither bit nor stung,
And those delivered from a woman's tongue.

(xlix)

His humility is increased when he considers that he has not the excuse of David, Solomon, and Samson who fell because beauty "rockt them asleepe" whereas in his case:

But gracious features dazled not mine eyes;
Two homely droyles were authors of my death;
Not love, but fear, my senses did surprize:
Not fear of force, but fear of woman's breath;
And those unnamed, ill grac't, despis'd, unknowne:
So base a blast my truth hath overthrown.

(liv)

0 women! woe to men; traps for their falls;
Still actors in all tragical mischances;
Earth's necessarie evils, captivating thralls,
Now murdring with your tongues, now with your glances;
Parents of life, and love, spoylers of both,
The theesues of harts; false do you love or loth.

(liv)

The meditative stanzas on the episode of the cock embarrass him further:

0 wakefull bird! proclaimer of the day,
Whose pearling note doth daunt the lion's rage;
Thy crowing did myselfe to me bewray,
My frights and brutish heats it did asswage:
But 0 in this alone, unhappy cocke,
That thou to count my foyles were made the clocke!

(xliv)

0 bird! the just rebuker of my crime,
The faithfull waker of my sleeping feares,
Be now the daily clocke to strike the time,
When stinted eyes shall pay their taskes of teares;
Vpbrad de mine eares with thine accusing crowe,
To make me rew that first it made me knowe.

(xlv)
In turning to Christ in the following stanza he acknowledges his pride and the lowly means taken to humble him. Interesting is his association of the woman and the cock:

O milde Reuenger of aspiring pride!
Thou canst dismount high thoughts to low effects;
Thou mad'st a cocke me for my fault to chide,
My lofty boasts this lowely bird corrects.
Well might a cocke correct me with a crowe,
Whom hennish cackling first did ouerthrow.

Peter enumerates the creatures that he chose in lieu of loyalty to his Creator:

Ah, life! sweet drop, drownd in a sea of sowres,
A flying good, posting to doubtfull end.

Threats threw me not, torments I none assayd:
My fray with shades; conceits did make me yeeld

O had I in that Court much stronger been
Or not so strong as first to enter in.

He regrets having gone

Where coales were kindled to the warmers' cost;
Where feare my thought canded with ysie cold,
Heat did my tongue to periuries vnfold.

Utterly vanquished at the full remembrance of his wrong and filled with an abhorrence of himself, he now turns to a fourteen-stanza consideration of his Master's eyes. Just as he sought deeper humiliation in his recollecting the causes of his sin, now he seeks more
overwhelming compunction in meditating upon the goodness and lovableness of Christ. The outcome of his long contemplation ends with his turning to God:

Thine eyes’ one looke serv’d as an onely knocke,
   To make my hart gush out a weeping flood;
Wherein my sinnes, as fishes, spawme their fifie,
   To shew their inward shames, and then to die.

But O how long demurre I on His eyes!
   Whose look did pearce my hart with healing wound,
Launcing imposthund sore of periur’d lyes,
   Which these two issues of mine eyes have found;
Where runne it must, till death the issues stop,
And penall life hath purg’d the finall drop.

Peter thinks with awful clearness of what the love of God consists and then admits the justice of his punishment:

O gratious spheres! where loue the center is,
   A nativue place for our selfe-loaden soules;
The compasse, loue--a cope that none can mis,
   The motion, loue,— that round about vs rowles;
O spheres of loue, whose center, cope, and motion,
Is loue of us, loue that inuites devotion!

I, outcast from these worlds, exiled from heauen,
   Poore saint, from heauen, from fire, cold salamander,
Lost fish, from those sweet waters' kindly home,
   From land of life styay’d pilgrim still I wander.
I know the cause: these worlds and nearer hell,
In which my faults haue best deseru’d to dwell.

The loveliest stanza of the long plaint is the one which gives us Peter arriving at a resolution — the turning point of remembrance as such to compunction because he realizes that the affront against God is the
vital thing and the hurt done himself is relatively
nothing:

Like sollest swan, that swims in silent deeps,
    And never sings but obsequies of death;
Sigh out thy plaints, and sole in secret weeps,
    In suing pardon, spend thy periur'd breath;
Attire thy soul in sorrow's mourning weeds,
    And at thine eyes let guilty conscience bleed.

(1xxvi)

Still in the limbeckes of thy dolefull brest
These bitter fruits that from my sinnes doe grow;
For fuel, selfe-accusing thoughts be best;
Vse fears as fire, the coals let penance blow;
And seekes none other quintessence but tears,
That eyes may shed what entred at thine eares.

(lxxvii)

The now repentant Peter continues to consider
sin, particularly that of notorious sinners, but he finds
that no sin is as serious as his own.

Caine's murdering hand imbrude in brother's blood,
    More mercy then my impious tongue may craue;
He kild a riuall with pretence of good,
    In hope God's doubled loue alone to haue.

(lxxxviii)

Poore Agar from her pheere enforc't to flye,
Wandering in Bersabeian wildes alone,
Doubting her child through helples drought would die,
    Layd it aloofe, and set her downe to moane;

(lxxxviii)

Faire Absolon's foule faults, compar'd with mine,
    Are brightest sands to mud of Sodome Lakes;
High aymes, yong spirits, birth of royall line,
    Made him play false where kingdoms were the stakes;

(xci)

He envies the infants who lost their lives at
Herod's command;
Your downy hands, both pearles and rubies crownd
My hoarie locks, did female feares confound.

(xciv)

One of the most hopeless passages is his dismay
that he cannot seek pardon of the Mother of Christ:

When, traytor to the Sonne is mother's eyes
I shall present my humble sute for grace,
What blush can paint the shame that will arise,
Or write my inward feelings on my face?
Might she the sorrow with the sinner see,
Though I despise, my griefe might pittied bee!

(xcvii)

But ah! how can her eares my speech endure,
Or sent my breath, still reeking hellish steeme?
Can Mother like what did the Sonne abuie,
Or hart deflower'd a virgin's love redeeme?
The mother nothing loues that Sonne doth loath:
Ah, lothsome wretch! detested of them both.

(xcviii)

Besides the Blessed Virgin he also turns to the
friends of his happy days—Mary, Martha, Lazarus, James,
John. Then he dwells upon the triumph of the devils,
whom he had dispocessed in the Name of Jesus:

Our rocke (say they) is riuen; O welcome howre!
Our eagle's wings are clipt that wrought so hie;
Our thundring cloude made noyse, but cast no showre;
He prostrate lies that would have scal'd the skie;
In woman's tongue our runner found a rub,
Our cedar now is shrunk into a shrub.

(ciii)

In stanzas cii to cxii he analyzes sin and
concludes his analysis:

Bewitching euill, that hides death in deceits,
Still borrowing lying shapes to maske thy face,
Now know I the deciphering of thy sleights;
A cunning, dearely bought with losse of grace:
Thy sugred poyson now hath wrought so well,
That thou hast made me to my selfe a hell.

(cxii)
After sighing and groaning through a number of further thoughts on sorrow and sleep, he devises a method by which his remorse will be more effective:

A selfe-contempt the shroude, my soule the corse,  
The beere, an humble hope, the herse-cloth, feare;  
The mourners, thought, in blacks of deepe remorse,  
The herse, grace, pitie, loue and mercie beare;  
My teares, my dole, the priest, a zealous will,  
Penance the tombe, and dolefull sighes the knill.  

Peter has passed through the first and second stages of the purgative way; now he is ready to pass to the third, that of the elevation of the soul in hope. He turns to Christ:

Christ! health of feuer'd soule, heauen of the mind,  
Force of the feeble, nurse of infant loues,  
Guide to the wandering foote, light to the blind,  
Whom weeping winnes, repentant sorrow moues;  
Father in care, mother in tender hart,  
Reuieue and saue me, slaine with sinnefull dart!  

However, he depends not upon himself, for he has really learned his miserable weakness and knows better than to trust himself:

A poors desire I have to mend my ill,  
I should, I would, I dare not say, I will.  

His sorrow has led to hope and the last two stanzas leave Peter in peace:

With mildnes, Jesu, measure mine offence;  
Let true remorse Thy due reuenge abate;  
Let tears appease when trespasse doth incense;  
Let pittie temper Thy seruered hate;
Let grace forgive, let love forget my fall;
With fear I crave, with hope I humbly call.

 Redeeme my lapse with ransom of Thy love,
Trauerse th' inditement, rigor's doom suspend;
Let frailty favour, sorrowes succour move,
Be Thou Thyselue, though changeling I offend.
Tender my sute, cleanse this defiled denne,
Cancell my debts, sweet Iesu, say Amen! (cxxxii)

The two sinner saints, Peter and Mary Magdalen were favorites with Southwell. Although he devoted his longest poem to the mourning of Peter for sin and a prose work to Mary Magdalen's Tears, he writes shorter poems about these two penitents and their inexhaustible sorrow. "Saint Peter's Afflicted Mynde" and "Saint Peter's Remorse," found in Maeoniae, are expressive of the purgative state. In these there is a calmness and tranquility that are absent from the "Complaint." There is less feeling for the shame of Peter than for his great humility and his greater love of God. He ends on an irresistible note in the "Remorse."

O mylde and mightye Lorde!
Ammend that is amisse;
My synn my sore, Thy love my salve,
Thy cure my comfort is.

Confirme Thy former deede,
Reforme that is defild;
I was, I am, I will remayne
Thy charge, Thy choice, Thy childe. 16

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16 Ibid., p. 152.
As there are degrees in the state of purgation, there are likewise levels in the state of illumination. Abbot Cisneros describes the various steps and Southwell exemplifies them in the short poems found in *Myrtae* and *Maenoniae*. The soul should entertain sentiments of thanksgiving for the numerous benefits of God, appreciation of the Providence of God, reconciliation with God, and contemplation of future glory. The prayer of those in the illuminative stage must always contain three elements: acknowledgment of sin, imploring of Mercy, and giving of thanks.

After having been tried in the Purgative Way, "let him pass thence to think upon the love of Heaven, exercising himself in the second Way, which is called Illuminative, because it illumines the heart through careful consideration of the benefits of God."... As the stars receive brightness from the sun, even so does this Illuminative Way receive rays of brightness from the true Sun of Righteousness, Christ our Redeemer; that is to say, from His most holy life, example and doctrine. For the life of the Saviour is naught else than a resplendent brightness to enlighten our souls. Wherefore, if thou wilt be enlightened, it behoves thee to consider frequently, and to get by heart, the life, example and doctrine of the Lord.17

Little effort is required to find evidence of the degrees of Illumination in the collection of Southwell's poems called *Myrtae* by Alexander Grosart. Mary

17 Cisneros, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-127 passim.
Magdalen's Blush" implies a reconciliation with God although the poem presents Mary as suffering remorse for her sin. She speaks of the heinousness of her sin:

When sense doth winne, the soule doth loose the field;
And present happ makes future hopes to yelde.

... ... ...
Yett graunt I must, sense is not free from synne,
For theefe he is that theefe admitteth in.18

The poem "Tymes God by Turnes" sings the Providence of God. Some of the lines of this exquisite lyric follow:

The lopped tree in tyme may growe agayne;
Most naked plants renewe both frute and floure;
The soriest wight may finde release of Payne;
The dryest soyle sucke in some moystning shoure;
Tymes go by turnes and chaunces chang by course,
From foule to fayre, from better happ to worse.

... ... ...
The saddest birdes a season finde to singe,
The roughest storme a calme may soon alaye;
Thus with succeeding turnes God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise yet feare to fall.19

"Scorne Not the Leaste" seems to be his contemplation of the Providence of God:

Where wardes are weake and foes encoutring,
Where mightier do assault then do defend,
The feebler part puts upp enforced wronge,
And silent sees that speech could not ament;
Yet higher poures must think though they repine,
When sunne is sett, the little starres will shine.

18 Southwell, op. cit., p 60.
19 Ibid., p. 64.
While pyke doth range the seely tench doth flye,
And crouch in privy creekes with smaller fishe;
Yet pikes are caught when little fish go by;
These fleete afloate while those do fill the dish.
There is a tyme even for the worme to creepe,
And sucke the dewe while all her foes do sleepe.

In Aman's pompe poore Mardocheus wept,
Yet God did turne his fate upon his foe;
The lazar pynd while Dives' feast was kept,
Yet he to heaven, to hell did Dives goe.
We trample grasse and prize the floures of May,
Yet grasse is greene when flowers do fade away.

In "Content and Riche" there is a profound sense
of tranquilility resulting from the bliss of the soul that
practices virtue habitually:

I dwell in Grace's courte,
Enrichd with Vertue's rightes;
Faith guides my witt; Love leades my will
Hope all my mynde delightes.

My conscience is my crowne,
Contented thoughts my rest;
My hart is happy in it selfe;
My blisse is in my breste.

And taught with often proofe,
A tempered calme I finde.
To be most solace to it self;
Best cure for angry mynde.

Consideration of future glory and a sense of
thanksgiving for God's gifts is felt in "At Home in
Heaven."

Fayre soule! how long shall veyles thy graces shroud?
How long shall this exile withhold thy right?

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20 Ibid., pp 68-69.
21 Ibid., pp. 72-74.
When will thy sunn disperse this mortall cloude,
And give thy glories scope to blaze their light?
O that a starr, more fitt for angells' eyes,
Should pyne in earth, not shyne above the skyes!

Thy ghostly beauty offred force to God:
It chayned Him in the linckes of tender love;
It woonn His will with man to make aboade;
It staid His sword, and did His wrath remove;
It made the rigour of His justice yelde;
And crowned Mercy empress of the feilde.22

The acknowledgement of and sorrow for sin that
should accompany the illuminative stage is especially
present in the poems about Mary Magdalen. In "Mary
Magdalen's Blushe" the predominating note is sorrow
for a sin that has been forgiven:

O sense! O soule! O had! O hoped blisse!
Yow woe, yow weane; yow draw, yow drive me backe;
Yow crosse encountering, like their combate is,
That never end but with some deadly wracke;
When sense doth wynne, the soule doth loose the
feilde,
And present happ makes future hopes to yelde

O heaven, lament! sense robbeth thee of sayntes,
Lament, O soules! sense spoyleth yow of grace;
Yet sense doth scarce deserve these hard complainytes,
Love is the theefe, sense but the entringe place;
Yet grant I must, sense is not free from synne,
For theefe he is that theefe admitteth in.23

"Mary Magdalen's Complaint at Christ's Death,"
combines elements of the three stages of prayer; the'
feeling of union predominates; here she laments the
death of Christ after she has enjoyed close union with

22Ibid., p. 86.
23Ibid., p. 60.
Him:

One that lives by other's breathe,
Dyeth also by his death,
With my love my life was nestled
In the summe of happyness;
From my love my life is wrested
To a world of heavynes;
O lett love my life remove,
Sith I live not where I love.24

Many were the poems written during this period upon the theme of Death. Southwell was not, therefore, unique in dwelling upon that idea, but because of his frequent reversion to it, and the manner in which he treated this reality, he has been acclaimed the poet of death. He did not consider death morbidly, but presented it as the necessary condition of attaining his dearest desire. "Life is but Loss" expresses his longing that his treasure may be "safe from theeeves." In the greater portion of the poem, he has created a sense of exquisite grief that he is separated from God and that he may not be courageous enough to face the vicissitudes of life; with a startling suddenness does he close:

Avaunt, O viper! I thy spite defye:
There is a God that overrules thy force,
Who can thy weapons to His will applie,
And shorten or prolong our brittle course.
I on His mercy, not thy might, relye;
To Him I live, for Him I hope to die.25

24 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
25 Ibid., p. 83.
"I Dye Alive" is another poignant longing for death. Had not the evidence been pointing to the fact that Southwell wrote no poetry in prison, one would be led to think that it had been written after one of his many cruel rackings; as it is, it may be considered to be a cry of the loving soul for fulfillment of union with God.

Not where I breath, but where I love, I live;
Not where I love, but where I am, I die;
The life I wish, must future glory give,
The deaths I feel in present dangers lie.  

Despite the title, "What Joy to Live," the poet finds nothing to entice him to wish to prolong his life:

For that I love I long, but that I lacke;
That others love I loath, and that I have;
All worldly freightes to me are deadly wracke,
Men present happy, I future hopes do crave;
They, loving where they live, long life require,
To live where best I love, death I desire.

His theme of longing for death is reiterated in "Life's Death, Love's Life"

And sith love is not where it lives,
Nor liveth where it loves,
Love hateth life that holdes it backe,
And death it best approves.

Mourne, therefore, no true lover's death,
Life onely him annoyes;
And when he taketh leave of life,
Then love begins his joyes.

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26 Ibid., p. 84.
27 Ibid., p. 85.
28 Ibid., p. 87.
All that the soul wants in the stage of illumination is pleaded for in the last stanza of "Synne's Heavy Load:"

O prostrate Christ! erect my croked mynde;
Lord! lett Thy fall my flight from earth obtaine;
Or if I still in Earth must nedes by shrynnde,
Then, Lord! on Earth come fall yet once againe;
And ether yelde with me earthe to lye,
Or els with Thee to take me to the skye.29

Both Saint Ignatius and Abbot Cisneros consider contemplation of the Life and Passion of Our Lord as the true mode of progressing in the illuminative way. Robert Southwell has a charming set of poems that concern the chronological incidents in the life of Our Lord and that of His Mother. Beginning with "The Conception of Our Ladie" and concluding with the "Assumption of Our Lady" this sequence in Maeoniae contains fresh and illuminating thoughts on the mystery of the Incarnation and may be truly considered the "lights" that accompany the illuminative stage of prayer.

In "The Conception of Our Ladie" the poet reverts to the beginning of the human race:

Power only wightes bredd without fault are nam'd
And all the rest conceived were in synne;
Without both man and wife was Adam fram'd,
Of man, but not of wife, did Eve beginne;
Wife without touch of man Christ's mother was,
Of man and wife this babe was bredd in grace.30

Only a mystical poet contemplating deeply "Our Lady's Nativitye" would indite the "Elias' little cloude," the following:

The patriarch and prophettes were the floruses
Which Tyme by course of ages did distill,
And culd into this little cloude the shoures
Whose gracious droppes the world with joy shall fill;
Whose moysture suppl eth every soule with grace,
And bringeth life to Adam's dyings race.

For God, on Earth, she is the ryall throne,
The chosen cloth to make his mortall weede;
The quarry to cut out our Corner-stone,
Soyle full to fruitie, yet free from mortall seeds;
For heavenly floruse she is the Jesse rodd
The child of man, the parent of a God.\(^{31}\)

In his use of the words "witching" and "disinchauntes" Southwell adds a note of surprise to his poem "Our Ladie's Salutation."

Spell Eva backe and Ave shall yowe finde,
The first beganne, the last reversd our harms;
An angell's witching words did Eva blynde,
An angell's Ave disinchauntes the charmes;
Death first by woeman's weakenes entred in,
In woeman's vertue life doth nowe beginn.\(^{32}\)

Bright is the ending of "The Visitation."

Eternall lightes inclosed in her breate
Shot out such percine beams of burning love,
That when her voyce her cosen's eares posset
The force thereof did force her babe to move;
With secret signes the children greete each other,
But open praise each leveth to his mother.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{31}\)Ibid., pp. 117-18.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 120.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 127.
One of the longer poems that Southwell has in *Maeoniae* is "Joseph's Amazement." Minutely does the poet describe the conflict that Joseph had to endure through his ignorance of Mary's divine maternity. At the end of the poem Joseph is still in suspense:

Yett still I tredd a maze of doubtfull end;  
I goe, I come, she drawes, she drives away;  
She woundes, she heales, she doth both marr and mend;  
She makes me seake and shunn, depart and stay;  
She is a frende to love, a foe to loathe,  
And in suspence I hange betwene them both.  

In the excerpts from "The Nativity of Christ," and "The Epiphanye," the reader is conscious of the soul in the illuminative stage.

Gift better then Him self God doth not knowe;  
Gift better then his God no man can see;  
This gift doth here the giver given bestowe;  
Gift to this gift lett eeh receiver bee;  
God is my gift, Him self He freely gave me;  
God's gift am I, and none but God shall have me.  

Three giftes they bringe, three giftes they bear away;  
For incense, myrrhe and gould, faith, hope 
and love;  
And with their giftes the givers' hartes do staye,  
Their mynde from Christ no parting can remove;  
His humble state, his stall, his poore retynewe,  
They phansie more then all theire ritch revenewe.

Other lines could be chosen to bear upon the way of illumination, but a sufficient number have been cited to show Southwell progressing in the illuminative. At

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34 Ibid., p. 126.  
35 Ibid., p. 128.  
36 Ibid., p. 133.
this point, it may be well to reiterate that each stage has its purgative, illuminative and unitive elements, and that it has been assumed with reason that Southwell had already attained the stage of union when he arrived in England.

The stage of union with God is reached by inward recollection and a turning from temporal things to those of eternity. Now silence is the need of the soul so that in tranquil, loving union with its Creator, it may embrace with reverence all the judgments of God.\textsuperscript{37}

He must seek for nothing, but must know that God His Well-Beloved is wholly sufficient for him; exalting God and giving Him supremacy in his heart, loving Him above all that can be seen, heard, thought or even imagined; for He is altogether to be loved, altogether to be desired, and altogether faithful.\textsuperscript{38}

All Southwell's religious poetry partakes of some element of the unitive stage, for he had attained to that level of prayer before he came to England and before he began to write any of his verse. This quality of union with God is present in all his poetry, but it is more obvious in some poems than in others. In "Lewd Love Is Losse" he writes as one who knows by experience

\textsuperscript{37}Cisneros, op. cit., pp. 140-44. passim.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 142.
the truth of his words:

Glean not in barnes soyle these offall-eares,
   Sith reape thou mayst whole harvests of delights;
Base joyes with greifes, bad hopes do end in feares;
   Lewd love with losse, evill peace with dedly fights:
God's love alone doth end with endless ease,
Whose joyes in hope, whose hope concludes in peace.

"From Fortune's Reach" closes with the following revealing stanza:

My light to love, my love to life, doth guide,—
   To life that lives by love, and loveth lights;
By love of one, to Whome all loves are tyd
   By duest debt, and never-equalled right;
Eyes' light, harte's love, soule's truest life
He is,
Consorting in three joyes one perfect blissee.

It is, however, in the hymns on the Childhood of Christ that the glow of Southwell's loving soul is most ardent. Of these "The Burning Babe," the love-liest and most frequently quoted of all his poems, will conclude this section that has traced the stages of mystical prayer in his verse.

As I in hoary Winter's night stood shiveringe
   in the snowe,
Surpris'd I was with sodayne heat, which made my harte to glowe;
And liftinge upp a fearefull eye to vewe what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burninge bright, did in the ayre appeare,
Who scorched with excessive heate, such floodos of teares did shedd,
   As though His floodes should quench His flames which with His teares were fedd;
   Alas! quoth He, but newly borne, in fiery heates I frye,

40 Ibid., p. 95.
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wound-\inge thorns;
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorn;
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blowes the coals,
The mettall in this furnace wrought are men's de-filed souls;
For which, as nowe on fire I am, to worke them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in My blood;
With this He vanisht out of sight, and swiftly shronck awaye,
And straight I called unto mynde that it was Christmas daye.46

Having traced the stages of mystical progress through the poems of Robert Southwell, the following conclusions have been deduced: from his earliest years the poet was drawn to the love of God and throughout his short life of thirty-three years his will was ever tending toward greater love. His whole life was "an ordered movement toward ever higher levels of reality, ever closer identification with the Infinite."

Since he had experienced the vicissitudes that accompany the soul on its journey to God through the stages of prayer, he was able to translate somewhat of his experiences into his poetry. The poetry of a man is an expression of his being; therefore, Southwell's

41 Ibid., pp. 109-10.
lyrics had to be of a mystical nature.

Repeatedly it has been stated that when Southwell had arrived in England, he was already enjoying close union with God, for he, as a fully-trained member of the Society of Jesus, was expected to have attained to this degree of prayer.

Even in the unitive stage elements of purgation and illumination may be present. This is evident in the preponderance of the purgative quality found in "Saint Peter's Complaint." In this long poem there is a steady, painful cleansing of the soul as it meditates upon its sinfulness in the light of God's Goodness and Love.

Breaking from sin with finality is sometimes a long process; for that reason, "St. Peter's Complaint" should not be considered too lengthy especially if the degrees that make up the stage of purgation are remembered. Saint Peter in his moan rises through each remembrance of past sins, imploring of God's Mercy with tears, humbling of self, satisfaction, grief at having lost the friendship of God, and finally, the turning of the soul to God in hope, to praise Him for His Goodness, Beauty and Mercy. All these qualities are found in "Saint Peter's Complaint."

"Saint Peter's Afflicted Mind," "Saint Peter's Remorse," and "Mary Magdalen's Blushe," short poems in
Maeonias express the sentiments of the purgative state but lack the sweep of the Complaint.

Many representative poems of the illuminative stage may be found in Maeonias and Myrtae. The degrees in this stage are: acknowledgment of sin, imploring of Mercy, thanksgiving, appreciation of the Providence of God, reconciliation with God, contemplation of future Glory. The soul is enlightened by prayerful consideration of the life, example, and doctrine of Christ.

Southwell, in his lyric-sequence on the events in the lives of Christ and His Mother, exemplifies the opinions of Abbot Cisneros, an authority on Mystical prayer, and Saint Ignatius, the Founder of the Society of Jesus, that meditations upon the life of Christ are necessary for the normal development of the illuminative stage.

"Tyme Goe by Turnes" and "Scorne Not the Leaste" refer to the Providence of God; "Content and Ritche" express the tranquillity of the soul living in an habitual state of virtue; "At Home in Heaven" and his many poems on Death are his contemplations of Heaven and the necessity of Death to help him attain his desire; "Mary Magdalen's Complaint at Christ's Death" is an example of a poem that combines the elements of the three
stages, but the qualities of the unitive stage are predominant.

The third stage in mystical prayer, that of union with God, is reached when the soul turns from temporal things and concerns itself entirely with those of Eternity. Its will is utterly united to the Will of God and nothing can disturb it. In silence it gives itself to the loving contemplation and enjoyment of the Judgments of God. Since the soul needs silence in this stage it is not strange that Southwell has left few poems that pertain exclusively to this degree of prayer. A word or phrase here or there may point to the unitive stage, but in comparison with the poems devoted to the purgative and illuminative ways, the number of poems for the unitive way is slight. Stanzas in "Lewd Love is Losse" and "From Fortune's Reach" hold out promises for the attainment of greater realities if Love and Fortune as the Elizabethans understood them are eschewed for eternal verities.

He has known the ravishment of God when he can write:

Whose soveraigne sent surpassing sense
So ravisheth the mynde,
That worldly weedes needes must be loath
That can these floweres finde.42

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42Ibid., p. 168.
In the poems of the Childhood of Our Lord must be sought the unmistakable qualities of the unitive stage. Using a despised meter, Southwell writes a poem so burning with Divine Love that to read it centuries after it has been written is to share the glow that the mystical poet poured into it at its inception.

Lest the poet supersede the mystic, which upsetting of values would obliterate the mystic, God in His Providence ordained that Robert Southwell should spend the last three years of his life in strict seclusion in prison where he wrote no poetry. Saint Bernard's works and the Bible were the books he requested to serve him as wings to fly to the embrace of God. What heights he reached during those three years may only be surmised, but on the day of his execution he went forth to meet the Beloved "looking most cheerfully."
CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL

The principles that the Catholic reformers laid down in regard to literary standards are important for understanding Robert Southwell and the poets that drew from him any inspiration. So great was the loss or forgetfulness of the quattrocento Renaissance for the inner and deeper sense of religion that many a poet had imbibed the spirit of antiquity to such an extent that he became almost neo-pagan. Jacobus Pontanus (1542-1626) finally expressed the dominant thought of the literary theorists of the Catholic Reformation. Poetry for him was an art which, in unfolding the human actions of men in verse, taught men how to live. Poetry could not be an end in itself, for it was really to be employed in teaching more than in delighting. In writing verse the weaknesses of men were to be taken into consideration, and the poets were to endeavour to entice them to righteousness by the literary beauty that cultivated taste preferred. Therefore, outward forms of Renaissance standards should be used, but the inward spirit of sensuousness was to be avoided.
Macarius Mutius of the fifteenth century found analogies between pagan beliefs and the Catholic truths, and by his practice, laid the foundation of Christian neo-classicism. In so doing he ushered in the literature of the Catholic Reformation. The Council of Trent was likewise steeped in an atmosphere of classicism.

The Jesuit critics of the sixteenth century, following the example of the Council of Trent, attempted to clothe Christian truth in a classical garb. Two conflicting tendencies developed; on the one hand, passion was distrusted to such an extent that restraint was advised in every sphere of human activity so that preciseness and conceit, as opposed to spontaneity and lyricism, became the ideal; on the other hand, the controversial spirit of the times led to an ardent love of Christ, zeal for His glory, and the desire for martyrdom, factors which resulted, eventually, in religious feeling in poetry. Still, the devotional poetry of the Catholic Reformation considered to be the most successful was that in which skillfulness of wit came into play.

The direct influence of the Catholic Reformation is manifested in what we might call the "cycle of remorse," which had its birth in Italy and spread to the whole of Western Europe. The tearful expression of contrition was, of course, no new thing in Christian literature. The twelfth-cent-

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tury Archithrenius or arch-weeper of Jean de Hantville had been shown as roaming all through the world, lamenting the sins and vices of man. Nevertheless repentance was not prominent even among the religious compositions of the Renaissance poets, who were pleased with life as it was, and did not consider this earth as a vale of tears. But it reappeared in full force after the Council of Trent, when the Church had made its children rueful for their past lasciviousness. Two main themes of the "cycle," which provided poets with endless variations, were the remorse of St. Peter after he had denied Christ, and the remorse of St. Mary Magdalen after her conversion.²

Robert Southwell, fashioned after the ideals of the Council of Trent through his Jesuit training, introduced the idea of repentance into the literature of England, giving to the English two models of remorse: Saint Peter and Saint Mary Magdalen. From Southwell to Crashaw there are numerous poems based upon the theme of tearful repentance, but the Jesuit is the poet who is credited with this contribution to English literature.

Besides this, his challenge to the poets, his choice of subject matter of a religious nature, and the impact of his life and his works upon his contemporaries should be considered in evaluating his influence upon the Elizabethan and Metaphysical poets.

Various reasons are alleged for the popularity of his works: the religious sentiment of his poetry and its understandable appeal to the vast number of Catholics

²Ibid., p. 175.
in England, and the pathos surrounding his death. None of these would have made a dent upon the literary fashion of the time unless his poetry possessed other qualities. His poetry conforms to the true nature of art which is "to capture and perpetuate an excellent and elemental mood." That reason and the fact that Southwell gave serious literary fare to the disillusioned, weary-spirited Elizabethans might be weightier arguments to account for his popularity.

The more closely we examine his writings the more clearly it appears that the poet consciously devoted his leisure hours to what we may call the apostleship of good literature, literature which in its form would please the taste of the readers he had in view, and which in its matter might lead them to more serious views of life.

He had set out to show poets how they might convert themes of human love to religious ones without sacrificing the fashionable attractions of alliteration, conceits, antithesis, and assonance. His sincerity as

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5 Colby, op. cit., p. 141.
6 Herbert Thurston, "Father Southwell the Euphuist," The Month, LXXXIII, 243.
a poet attracted not only those who would peruse pious
verse for the sake of the religious sentiment, but also
the literary giants of his time, seeking in current pub-
lications trends in and expression of contemporary
thought.

Perhaps no higher testimony can be found of the
esteem in which Southwell's verse was held by his
contemporaries than the fact that, while it is
probable that Southwell had read Shakespeare, it
is practically certain that Shakespeare had read
Southwell and had imitated him.

In an interesting piece of conjecture K. C.
MacDonald writes:

Now Father Southwell dedicated his own beautiful
poem, "St. Peter's Complaint," to one W. S. whom
he meant, we do not know, for he calls him his
cousin; but in the dedication he declared war on
the classicists, and claimed that religious sub-
jects offered a wider and fairer field for poetry.

It is rather commonplace to find critics noting
the external similarity between Shakespeare's "Venus and
Adonis" and Southwell's "Saint Peter's Complaint." Both
poems are couched in the same stanzaic form, and the con-
tents of the former would impel the Jesuit poet to urge
the "finest wits" to turn from such sensuous writing to
something more grave.

7 Herbert Thurston, "Robert Southwell," in
Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: The Gilmary Society,
1940), XIV, 165.

8K. C. MacDonald "Blessed Robert Southwell, S.J.
And William Shakespeare," The Month, CLVIII, 350.
In fact, Christopher Devlin considers 1593 the year in which Shakespeare turned to "graver work." This graver work is "Lucrece." Despite the difference in theme, there is considerable affinity in Shakespeare's and Southwell's treatment of temptation, sin and their effects—ideas, apparently, out of place in "Lucrece."

Then, it dawns on one that Shakespeare is beating Southwell at his own game. Southwell had set himself to probe "the anatomic of sinne." Shakespeare is doing the same thing but doing it much better. Shakespeare is more interested in Tarquin's soul than in Lucrece's body...there is a rape within a rape; Tarquin does violence to the divine spark that is in him.

The striking image that Shakespeare uses in the line "To see the salve doth make the wound ache more" cannot but recall two passages of Southwell's:

Seek his salve while sore is green,
Festred wounds ask deeper launcing.

Like tyrant, cruel wounds she gives,
Like surgeon, salve she lends;
But salve and sore have equal force
For death is both their ends.

Of stars both poets write lovely lines that

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11 Southwell, op. cit., p. 76.

12 Ibid., p. 80.
mutually recall each other. Southwell gently says:

Yet higher pourcs must think though they repine.  
When sunne is sett, the little starres will shyne.  

Shakespeare more forthrightly pronounces:

The moon being clouded presently is missed,  
But little stars may hide them when they list.

Another trite criticism that is frequently to be found in discussions involving Shakespeare and Southwell is that "Venus and Adonis" fired Southwell to write the challenging "Saint Peter's Complaint" for in the preface to his long poem he writes:

Still finest wits are 'stilling Venus' rose;  
In Paynim toyes the sweetest values are spent,  
To Christian workes few have their talents lent.

"Lucrece," in its turn, is conjectured to have been Shakespeare's answer to the challenge of "Peter." At any rate Shakespeare did promise his patron, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southhampton, to present him with something more grave than "Venus and Adonis."

Besides the real or imagined influence of Southwell on Shakespeare other scholars have found evidence to show the Jesuit's influence on his contempor-

13 Ibid., p. 68.
14 Shakespeare, "Lucrece," 11. 1007-08.
15 Ibid., p. 1453.
aries. The prestige of Southwell is recognized in the following:

Poetry of an argumentative and philosophic type was produced towards the end of the century, but very little of value that was religious except the work of Robert Southwell. His book had a distinct influence on contemporary and later poetry, touching Ben Jonson and perhaps Milton himself. Its quaintness of wit (allying it somewhat to the "metaphysical" school of the next generation) are shot through with warm human feeling which makes its direct appeal to the reader. And sincerity is the very note of it all. 16

As has been noted earlier, Jonson held in high esteem "The Burning Babe." Concerning the importance of that glowing poem, Thomas Fox avers that fifty thousand anthologists cannot be wrong in proclaiming it an oasis. 17

Mr. Devlin's brilliant and illuminating research shows the influence of Southwell in the works of William Shakespeare, Thomas Nash, Nicholas Breton, Thomas Lodge, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton and Christopher Marlowe. In all these poets' works there appeared an abrupt change from a profane to a spiritual attitude about the year 1592. He further shows that


17 Thomas Fox, "Saint Among Euphuists," Catholic World, CLI (1940), 203.
there is external and internal evidence to conclude that
the change was due to Robert Southwell.

His listing of the works that demonstrate the
poets' answers to the challenge of Southwell to employ
their talents more worthily are: Thomas Nash's
"Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem" (1593); Nicholas
Breton's "Mary Magdalen's Love" (1595); Thomas Lodge's
"Tears of ...the Mother of God"(1596); Samuel Daniel's
"Complaint of Rosamunde" (1592); William Shakespeare's
"Lucrece" (1594); and Michael Drayton's "Matilda the
Fair" (1594). In Matilda, Rosamunde, and Lucrece
there is more repentance than rape. It must be rem-
embered that "St. Peter's Complaint" was circulating
in manuscript from 1591, even though it was not pub­
lished until 1595.

Nash, a coarse writer in London, in his preface
to "Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem" promises an unfeigned
conversion, which resolve led Gabriel Harvey to accuse
him of following the lead of Southwell.

It was something to have induced Nash, even
for a time, to turn from his ribaldry, and to
have enlisted such pens as those of Lodge, Breton,

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19 Ibid., p. 172.
Rowlands, and Markham in the cause of morality and religion. 20

Not only has Southwell's influence been traced in the works of the major poets of his time, but numerous are the poems written by lesser writers, showing more definitely and less subtly, the impact of his thought and inspiration. For example, Father Thurston has found in Bodenham's Belvidere of 1600 mutilated lines of Southwell's poems although there is no mention of his name. He cites this line of Southwell:

In some things all, in all things none are crossed;
and its distortion in the Belvidere,
In something all, in nothing all are crossed. 21

John Dowland's Songs or Ayres of Foure Partes with Tablature for the Lute were published in three books in the year 1597, 1600 and 1605, respectively. He seems to have borrowed frequently from the lyrics of Southwell for ideas and images. Of course, his sighing is for human rather than divine love, but his probable gleanings from Southwell are interesting. "Scorne Not the Leaste" with its gently persuasive insistence on Divine

20 Herbert Thurston, "Robert Southwell, the Popular Poet," The Month, LXXXIII, 397.
21 Ibid., p. 390.
Providence in the lines:

He that high growth on cedars did bestowe,
Gave also lowly mushrooms leave to grow,

seems to have been the inspiration for Dowland's "The Lowest Trees Have Tops" in which are found the lines:

The lowest trees have tops, the ant her gall,
The fly her spleen, the little spark his heat,
And slender hairs cast shadows though but small
And bees have stings, although they be not great.

It is possible that the same poem of Southwell with its building up of contrasts may have served Thomas Campion, the outstanding song writer of his time, with ideas. Campion in the following lines seems to have a variation on the theme presented by Southwell:

The tender graft is easily broke,
But who shall shake the sturdy oak?
You are more fresh and fair than I
Yet stubs do live when flowers do die.

A very bold borrowing from Southwell's "A Child My Choice" is that found in Richard Rowland's "Our Blessed Lady's Lullaby," when he patches his verse with "My babe, my bliss, my child, my choice."

22Southwell, op. cit., p. 69.


24Thomas Campion, Ibid., p. 139.

Of another lullaby writer, Richard Verstegan, Louise Imogene Guiney remarks, "At his best, he touches Southwell at half a dozen points in the lovely lullaby."26

There can be no doubt that Southwell exerted an influence upon his generation quite out of proportion to his status as a minor poet. At present scholars are attempting a truer estimate of his importance.

The Catholic Recusants both at home and overseas wrote hymns and memorial verses and meditations on various privileges and hardships of their suppressed life, and some of these, notably the poems of Father Southwell from the end of the preceding century, enjoyed a good deal of esteem even in circles to which their principles were anathema and the fate of their author well-deserved.27

In regard to the influence that Southwell exerted upon the metaphysical poets, there are conflicting opinions, but undoubtedly, interest in his poetry "set in motion ripples in the stream of literature that widened into the circle that included Herbert and Crashaw and the seventeenth century divines."28

Some, judging by externalities, make Southwell the influencing forerunner of the conceitists of the


early seventeenth century; other, with deeper insight, have placed John Donne at their head. Pierre Janelle seems to have made the keenest analysis of Southwell's contribution, if any, to the metaphysical movement in poetry. He argues that the most important poets, George Herbert and Henry Vaughan, considered themselves as Protestants and would disclaim any dependence upon "Popish" sources. Still, the Catholic Reformation did play an important part in their upbringing.

Southwell, having imbibed the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, did all in his power to spread its influence. Fortunately, he was equipped through his natural gifts and his Jesuit vocation to be a powerful instrument in influencing through his literary activities both his contemporaries and those who followed. It is noteworthy that Southwell, Herbert, and Vaughan descried the manner in which poets abused their gifts. 29

More important still is the likeness between Southwell and the Caroline poets in regard to the practical moral ideal which they preach; the ideal of wise moderation, of staid decency, of modest gravity and sobriety. Indeed that ideal was no new thing. It was essentially that of the Christian humanists, "sustine and abistine;" and it might be considered a moot point whether it came down to the Caroline poets directly from the times of Surrey and Wyatt, through a purely English tradition, or from the writers of the

29 Janelle, Robert Southwell, op. cit., pp. 328-
Catholic Reformation. The latter seems, however, the more likely. The traditional element in the Church of England had suffered a Calvinistic eclipse of thirty years' duration after the accession of Queen Elizabeth; and it is striking enough that it should only have reappeared from 1590 onwards, after the Catholic mission had had time to fructify, thus coming back to England on a circuitous route. Anyhow, there is a notable similarity between the practical advice included in Southwell's *Short Rule of Good Life* and that which appears in Herbert's *Church Porch*, and, to some extent, in Vaughan's *Rules and Lessons*.30

In reading the poetry of George Herbert for the purpose of comparing it with Southwell's, certain external similarities are apparent. Both are more concerned with the spiritual than with the mundane. Herbert teaches constantly and lengthily, but for all his effusions never warms the heart of his reader, inspiring him to seek God unwearingly until he finds Him. Southwell, the greater poet, delighting as well as teaching, captivates the reader and gently draws him to consider the facets of eternal truth until he will not be satisfied unless he possess it for himself.

In considering John Donne in relation to Robert Southwell, the conclusion is that for all the external mannerisms of both poets, they are and will ever remain poles apart. John Donne's love poetry hymns human love so exquisitely that, it seems, he would be willing to rest there eternally, but for the

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intervention of God in taking his wife in death. Then

Donne writes:

Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her Soule early into heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.
Here the admiring her my mind did whett
To seeks thee God; so streams do shew their head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.
But why should I begg more Love, when as thou
Dost woee my soule for hers; offring all thine:
And dost not only feare least I allow
My Love to Saints and Angels things divine,
But in thy tender jealosy dost doubt
Least the World, Fleshe, yea Devill putt thee out.31

Vainly does the reader seek the warm mystical quality in Donne's Divine Poems, a quality that is ever present in Southwell's. The latter says:

Mourn, therefore, no true lover's death
Life onely him annoyes;
And when he taketh leave of life
Then love beginns his joyes.32

For all his ardent words the poetry of Henry Vaughan is cold. There is a Puritanical frigidity about the poets who write at length and dutifully about sacred things. Vaughan comes closer to the spirit of Southwell, but he, too, remains on the outskirts of close union with God, begging mystical favors, but begging not receiving.


32Southwell, op. cit., p. 106.
In the last stanza of "The World" he depicts his own condition of seeking, of being illuminated as it were, but not of enjoying the experimental knowledge of the loving God:

"O fools," said I, "thus to prefer dark night
Before true light!
To live in grots and caves, and hate the day
Because it shews the way,
The way, which, from this dead and dark abode,
Leads up to God;
A way where you might tread the sun, and be
More bright than he!
But as I did their madness so discusse,
One whisper's thus,
"This ring the bridegrooms did for none provide,
But for his bride." 33

Richard Crashaw has more real affinity to Southwell than any of the poets so far considered. There is in his epigrams a studied effort to attain an effect; in this conscious effort on his part, it is quite easy to relate his work to the affectedness found in Southwell. However, Crashaw wrote his epigrams concerning incidents from the life of Christ before he was received into the Catholic Church, before he enjoyed that full stream of grace that leads to mystical union with God.

Invariably the comparison of the poetry of Southwell and Crashaw is expressed somewhat as follows:

Compared with the poems of later Roman Catholic writers like Crashaw, Southwell's style is pure and simple... the unprejudiced reader will find in Southwell a mirror of genuine emotion without any attempt at wit for wit's sake. 34

There is perhaps more genuine poetic worth, though there is less accomplishment of form, in the unfortunate Father Robert Southwell.... [Southwell's poems] have not a little of the "hectic" tone, which marks still more strongly the chief English Roman Catholic poet of the next century, Crashaw; but are never, as Crashaw sometimes is, hysterical. 35

Southwell's poetry is, undoubtedly, at times over-ornate, but there is a sureness and sincerity in his poetic utterances that appeal immediately to the reader.

He has that sincerity of intellect, as opposed to a sincerity of will, without which cannot be attained that 'splendor quidam' which is essential to beauty. 36

He not only uses religious themes but attains a spiritual quality that is absent in the poetry of other religious writers of the period.

In Crashaw's long, irregular, ecstatic, pirouetting odes, one hears... the voice of the poet who has found his way back to Rome and cannot give too passionate utterance to his sense of regained security, his emotional sensuous delight in sacraments, rituals, cults, his complete surrender to an unquestioning faith and obedience... Crashaw's raptures are

35 Saintbury, op. cit., p. 120.
at least as sensuous as they are spiritual.\textsuperscript{37}

Southwell introduced a religious, a mystical element into English poetry, an element that was not, according to Edmund Gosse, "to be taken up again until nearly twenty years after his death at Tyburn... to be carried on and up till it culminated in the raptures of Crashaw."\textsuperscript{38}

From a study of the influence of Robert Southwell in English literature, the following conclusions have been reached; it is impossible to study the works of the poet, Jesuit and martyr, apart from a realization of the literary ideals of the Council of Trent. In that light, Southwell, embodying the ideals of the Counter-Reformation, employs them with sincerity and artistry. His interior life of prayer made it possible for him to use the external forms of poetry and to be able to avoid the sensuousness so often present in religious poetry. Despite his preciosity and concetism, his spontaneity and lyricism were not destroyed. Through his "Saint Peter's Complaint," and Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears he introduced the theme of


tearful repentance into the literature of England.

It has been shown that his challenge to his contemporaries was accepted with the result that a more serious type of poetry was written by the greater poets of the Elizabethan period. Because he was a true poet, a religious poet, and an exquisite lyricist, he enjoyed a popularity with the literary giants of his time, and the Catholic and Protestant populace, who sought for serious reading.

The influence of Southwell may be found in the works of his contemporaries, Shakespeare, Nash, Lodge, Breton, Markham, Marlowe and others. Likewise, his influence may be traced in the works of the metaphysical poets, although it is more of a superficial rather than of an essential order. To try to make Southwell the founder of the metaphysical school of poetry is rather far-fetched, because the religious poets of the seventeenth century had been cut off from the source of grace and inspiration that were the real formative factors in developing Southwell as a poet. Even when compared with Crashaw, a poet imbued with the same spirit that vivifies him, Southwell remains, for all the striving of critics to link him with others, the poet-mystic among the Elizabethans.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of this study dealing with the mystical qualities of Robert Southwell's poetry the incidents of his life tending to account for his mysticism were related. Therein was cited his mother's care in nurturing his earliest spiritual life and her solicitude in choosing for him a school that would safeguard his Faith.

At the University of Douay in Flanders he came in contact for the first time with Jesuit training and spirituality with the result that he began to think about entering the Society of Jesus. Here, too, his study of the classics opened for him an avenue of knowledge for which he had a natural aptitude. Other schools that he subsequently attended in Paris and in Rome continued to direct his spiritual and mental development along similar lines.

Before his vocation was finally settled he had to endure a siege of temptation under which his soul was torn between the "bark of Bruno and that of Ignatius." At last he determined to embrace the discipline
of the Society with a thoroughness that would ensure his losing neither the fruits of Carthusian contemplation nor those of the apostolate of the Society of Jesus.

Arriving at his English mission, where his mere presence was an act of treason, the future martyr was already the fully-trained Jesuit, conformed to the standards of Saint Ignatius. For the Greater Glory of God he had learned to conquer himself, had aimed always at deeper interior sincerity, and had become adept at proving his love of God by his actions. Now he would be exercised in the works of the active apostolate and strengthened by persecution that his spiritual life might be brought to its maturity and crowned with the sacrifice of his life.

He understood that only in proportion to his union with God could he benefit souls or attain the crown that he coveted: martyrdom. In one of his early meditations he had plumbed depths that later in his life he would actually experience.

Consider what great perfection is required in a religious of the Society, who must be ready at any moment to go to any quarter of the globe and to any race of mankind. There are heretics, Turks, pagans, Tartars, etc., and we must be provided with all the virtues that are necessary in order to deal with all of these with profit and edification. Think, for example, what would be required in one who was to deal with Indians, what patience he should have, what careful mod-
oration in his words, gestures and all his actions, what close union with God. Or again what would be required in one cast into prison by the heretics, wasted by hunger and thirst, tempted by harlots and in numberless other ways, torn by the rack and other tortures and so on. Let us understand that we are bound to acquire all the virtues that we see would be necessary in such circumstances to bear in a truly religious spirit these and even greater pains, nay, death itself. For we have vowed that we will go to any part of the earth to which we are sent.1

Southwell's perfect conformity to the standards and ideals of Saint Ignatius and his thorough acquiescence to the tenets of the Counter-Reformation in regard to literature must ever be held in mind if his contribution as the mystical poet of the Elizabethan Age is to be understood.

The latter [literary theory of the Jesuits] was part of the plan of action through which they sought to extend their influence to every branch of human activity, art being included. It was practical and utilitarian. It made no attempt to innovate, but following the directions of the Council of Trent, struck the easier path, and confirmed the classicism of the Renaissance, while attempting to make it morally harmless; but the very fact that it banished "passion" from literature and tried to substitute methodical reflection for inspiration, explains why it took the heart out of those very forms of poetry to which it sought to give new life.2

Although Southwell did not think that poetry was the highest form of literature, he saw the possibilities that it held as an apostolic work. The

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profane love that poets unceasingly hymned at great length made him determine to challenge the poets to use their gifts for more noble ends. Further, he would show how well religious subject matter could be employed in writing verse, hoping that his contemporaries would accept his challenge and follow his example.

Nor should Southwell be considered as a religious fanatic in decrying the state of lyrical poetry. Sir Philip Sidney, the foremost critic of Elizabethan poetry, attempted to lay before the minds of thoughtful readers the depths into which the art of poetry had fallen. Both Southwell and Sidney challenged the poets to a more worthy, sincere and serious employment of their gifts. Both knew the imputations against the poets; that they were on the same level as lovers and liars, and wont to give their time to a less important and less useful form of knowledge. Neither would admit that poetry abused man's wit; on the contrary, each held that man's wit abused poetry. Both supported their arguments with incidents taken from the Scriptures and from pagan writers. Southwell appealed strongly to the moral, spiritual consciences of his readers; Sidney to their critical, aesthetic faculties.

Southwell did not object to the forms of poetry that the Elizabethan poets and readers liked so well;
therefore, he adopted the popular forms when he set out to demonstrate to the poets how they might use religious matter, a "new webbe" on the "old loome." In developing his style he followed the tradition of Wyatt and Surrey and the early Miscellanies rather than the mode set by Spencer and the later Elizabethans. All the devices treasured by his contemporaries—the conceit, alliterations, imitations of foreign models, excessive word play, paradoxes—were all part of his poetic technique in his efforts to teach and to challenge the poets.

In "Saint Peter's Complaint," a long poem of remorse, and Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears, a prose work on the same theme, Southwell made the unique contribution to English literature in introducing the concept of tears and repentance for sin. Although he borrowed the idea from the Italian, Luigi Tansillo, he far surpassed his predecessor in artistic expression.

More than any other poet Southwell has been acclaimed the most brilliant user of the Poulter's measure, the common time of hymn tunes, and one having an irresistible tendency to fall into jog-trot. In this seemingly simple but actually difficult meter Southwell wrote many of his loveliest poems and his most memorable and mystical lyric, "The Burning Babe."
At first reading of his poetry the ornateness of his diction is most impressive; further study clarifies with the result that his charming ideas and their quaint expression delight the mind. In delighting, Southwell distinguishes himself as a true poet although a minor one. As he advanced in the exercise of his art, he gradually broke away from reliance upon models. Once freed from excessive Elizabethan mannerisms, his poetry assumed a more sincere and lyrical quality.

In his shorter poems,  Maecenae, he teaches the thoughtful that many things like human love, fame, wealth, and fortune are values of an ephemeral nature, and they who seek them too ardently waste precious time and opportunity. To his age his message would have but scant appeal if his efforts had resulted in mere didacticism. Moreover, his presentation of religious values is so pleasant that the reader submits to be taught because of the poet's delightful sincerity.

The results of Southwell's challenge to the poets were soon evident. Many imitations of "Saint Peter's Complaint" began to appear after 1591 when that poem and  Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears had first appeared in manuscript. Scholars have found the influence of Southwell in the works of Shakespeare, Jonson, Nash, Breton, Lodge, Harvey and other of his con-
Some have acclaimed him as the founder of the metaphysical school of poets, but this relation is more apparent than real. Leading poets of the seventeenth century used religious subjects, treating them from a moral rather than from a mystical viewpoint. In this they differed decidedly from Robert Southwell. For instance, John Donne was led to the love of God only after human love had been experienced. Southwell never turned from his first love, God. There is for him only and ever a more intensive giving of himself to God. One of his favorite prayers was: "God gave himself to thee; give thyself to God."

Herbert and Vaughan are termed religious poets. They write as if they believed that God is Love, but their poetry does not evince their having the experimental knowledge that God is Love. They could not be expected to translate mystical experiences into poetry, for they were outside the current in which mysticism as defined in this study flourishes. It is only in the Catholic Church that a soul can progress in prayer and eventually attain mystical union with God, the normal blossoming of the Christian life.  

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Southwell had set out early to give himself to God, and he made continual progress until his life was crowned with martyrdom.

For the Church, therefore, the martyr is the saint par excellence: he is at once ascetic and mystic. He embodies the unity of asceticism and mysticism.  

In comparing the work of Richard Crashaw with that of Robert Southwell the obvious conclusion is that, although both drew inspiration from the same source, the former tinged his poetry with a sensuousness that is not to be found in that of the latter. Crashaw in seeking for effects becomes hectic; Southwell exhibits always a becoming restraint.

In his poetry, Southwell exemplifies the methodology of mystical prayer in an unassuming, extra-ordinary manner. The traditional teaching of the Church is that the soul on its journey toward union with its creator must pass through various stages of prayer. Purgation is that stage in which the soul remembers its past sins, determines to break from them forever and begins to devote itself to bemoaning past offenses while it attempts to replace habits of sin with habits of virtue. In Southwell's shorter poem, but especially in his long "Saint

\[4\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 215.\]
Peter's Complaint" the progress of a soul in the person of Saint Peter is described as it goes through this stage. Only one who has experienced the toil of mounting through this stage could have depicted the remorse of Saint Peter and his attaining ultimately to tranquillity and peace.

It is very unlikely that Robert Southwell had at hand any treatise on the degrees of the stages of prayer, but for purposes of comparison *The Spiritual Exercises* of Abbot Cisneros provides the theoretical explanation and Southwell's poetry the subjective expression of the normal progress of the soul on its way to union with God.

Many are the poems that describe the degrees in the stage of illumination. Herein, the soul may be expected to acknowledge its sin with more emphasis on the thankfulness that it has been forgiven. Appreciation of the goodness of God, His Providence, and intenser study of the Gospel in an effort to understand the Personality of Christ better, a turning from temporal concerns, devotedness to considerations of eternal matters are the degrees that Cisneros outlines for this stage. Southwell shows in *Maeoniae* and *Myrtae* the treasures of illumination that were his. Even the titles of his poems show the progress of his soul in

Although the period of illumination delights the soul with its inexhaustible matter for contemplation, the faithful soul finds that God has delights greater still, and gradually it finds itself drawn into the final stage of the Mystical Way, union with God. Silence is the need of the soul while it contemplates, enjoys and surrenders itself to its Beloved.

As might be expected the poetic utterances are few in this stage. In comparison with other poets Southwell has a large number of poems or excerpts representing this stage; in comparing the number with those he wrote describing the earlier stages, they are few. One theme, Death, he unceasingly hymned, but unlike the other Elizabethans, who found it popular and inspirational, he gave to its treatment a new turn. For him Death was the certain way that he might attain his desire, eternal union with the Beloved.

In the poems of the childhood of Our Lord, he meditates in so glowing a way that the warmth of his ardent longing and love permeates them. So unmistakably is the mystical quality of "The Burning Babe" that it
gives its author an assured place among the mystical poets of all time.

Southwell, the mystic, had preceded Southwell, the poet; it was fitting, therefore, that when the poet had fulfilled his function of challenging and teaching other poets to use religious subject matter, convincing them that "vertue and verse suited together," the poet should withdraw and let the mystic progress along his way to God. That is what happened; after writing poetry during a period of three years, he was captured, imprisoned and left in solitude for the three years before his death. When he came forth, he was tried and found guilty of death. During his incarceration he wrote no poetry. He had asked for the Bible and the works of Saint Bernard, and a Breviary had been given to him. What heights of mystical prayer and union with God he reached before he was taken to Tyburn may only be imagined. On the morning of his death the joy apparently his made people stop in the streets to gaze upon his shining countenance. Southwell, the poet of joy, the poet of longing for death, the poet of love of God and man, was on his way to Him, Whose singing knight-errant he had been in Elizabethan England.
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