



5th Lecture

The Altar

The whole poem is a conceit = مقارنة = a sustained مستمر metaphor. There is a metaphor upon which the whole images are built. We have a conceit built on comparing the heart of the speaker to the altar المذبح of the church. He is describing his broken heart. He asks God to accept his heart as a symbol of sacrifice تضحية like the altar that is a symbol of sacrifice.

From the very beginning, he draws this comparison. He describes his heart as a broken altar and cemented يلتصق with tears = joined with tears الدموع = the tears are a symbol of repentance التوبة. It is cemented with tears of repent and regret ندم. He repents to God. He asks for forgiveness السماح.

The broken altar = his broken heart is cemented with tears.

Made of a heart, and cemented with teares:
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workmans tool hath

We have a colon. It means that he still speaking about the heart. This heart is made by God. It is the creation of God himself. No one can form the same- create the same. It is a reference إلى إشارة to the first altar- there are some verses in the Bible الإنجيل which say that God had asked Moses موسى to make this kind of altar of one stone without shaping it يشكل- to find a stone which can form an altar without being touched يلمس by any worker.

This is an allusion إشارة ضمنية. تلميح. He refers to that verse which says that God had ordered Moses to make the first- to create- to find an altar with a piece of stone- not to cut it, not to shape it.

The speaker's heart is created by God. It is His own creation. It is as God has created it.

The first four lines speak about this heart comparing it to the first altar which was created by God.

No workmans tool hath touch'd the same
A HEART alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.

God is the only one who knows what is there- **و يعلم ما فى الصدور** – it is God who shaped the heart- **انك لا تهدي من أحببت و لكن الله يهدي من يشاء** - it is God who shaped this heart. It is like a stone and no one can shape it but God.

Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame,
To praise thy Name:

Each part of this heart is shaped to praise **بمدح** the name of God.

That if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctifie this ALTAR to be thine

If he ceased to praise God, his heart will continue praising **مدح** God because the heart is made for this- to praise God. He asks Jesus **المسيح** to accept him as one of his followers **اتباعه** so that he can be one of those whom Jesus had sacrificed **يضحي** for them, to accept him as a believer **مؤمن** - as a follower. In return, he asks Jesus to accept his own altar= his heart as a sacrifice for him. As God accepted Jesus' sacrifice, he asks God to accept his sacrifice as well.

This is the division of thought in the poem

The Rhyme scheme:

aa bb cc dd ee ff = heroic couplet

The rhyme shows that the lines are couplets. The poem consists of couplets. Why they are heroic couplets?

A heroic couplet = is a couplet which consists of 5 feet in iambic pentameter.

The first four lines are written in iambic pentameter

The middle part of the poem is written in iambic diameter.

The last four lines are written in iambic pentameter

This is the form of the poem. It is not a sonnet

It is a poem consists of 16 lines. It is divided equally- 8 lines are written in iambic pentameter and 8 lines are written in iambic diameter.

We have a division of thoughts. In the beginning he starts with a conceit comparing his heart to an altar, then describing his heart, how it is devoted مخلص to God. At the end, he ends with the same idea that his heart is a symbol of sacrifice التضحية for the Christ as the altar is a symbol of sacrifice of the Christ to people.

The poem is balanced متوازن even in the idea.

The shape of the poem refers to the altar itself. It helps the poet to refer to the theme easily. It lets the reader to understand from the first sight نظرة أولى what he wants to say.

There is something significant مهم about the way the words are written. There are 4 words that are totally **capitalized**. - **ALTAR- HEART- SACRIFICE- ALTAR**

There is a comparison between altar and heart. They are both symbols of sacrifice.

Altar and heart refer to the conceit- the comparison- the metaphor of the heart as an altar. Both of them- the heart and the altar end to be a symbol of sacrifice. These are the main words that carry the theme. They carry the mean of the conceit from the very beginning.

This is how the form of the poem supports the meaning- the rhyme scheme and the capitalized words help in conveying the meaning.

What is the significance of writing in heroic couplets?

Heroic couplets are usually used in writing epics ملحمة, in writing great poetry. It is the first English rhyme which was used before the middle ages and in hymns ترانيم written to be sung يغنى in the church. It is something great to write such a poem. It is difficult to use heroic couplets. The poet is trying to give more value قيمة to his poem. The heroic couplet here is appropriate مناسب. It suits the theme of the poem- lofted and elevated عالى. This is what the poet wants to convey and this is the impression انطباع he wants us to feel. The

heroic couplets help the poet to give that impression that he wants to convey to the readers.

In the poem, we have long lines, short line, then long lines. It creates music. The rhyme goes quickly in the short lines in the middle.

The rhyme scheme, the meter suits the fact that it is a song to be sung in the church.

The idea: there is a comparison between the heart of the speaker and the altar itself, the altar as a symbol of sacrifice for God as a good Christian.

The second idea is that this heart is broken into pieces but it is cemented with tears, with regret, with full love to God. No one can shape this heart except God himself. He has made it to praise His name and it will continue praising His name for ever even if the speaker died, stopped speaking, his heart will continue to praise the name of God.

He reaches to the end of the poem with the speaker asking God to accept him as a good believer and follower who deserves his sacrifice and in return, he is ready to sacrifice his heart for God.



George Herbert

Jordan (I)

It is very simple and short. It carries meanings

What is the meaning of the title? Why is he writing about Jordan?

Jordan= the Jordan River is on the eastern of Palestine. Christians consider it to be a holy place - a scared river for them- Jesus Christ was baptized there. They believe that they should wash in the sacred water to purify their souls.

George Herbert as a Christian believes in this.

Jordan is a scared place for the Christians.

1st stanza:

Who says that fictions only and false hair
Become a verse? Is there no truth in beauty?
Is all good structure in a winding stair?

The poem starts with questions. They are all rhetorical بلاغى questions- they do not need answers. The answers are usually found e question themselves.

With the first question, he asks - who says that verse شعر is concerned ب مهمتم only with fiction, imagination, with things which are untrue, with beautiful hair?

Is truth a good field for writing poetry?

a winding stair= سلم لولبي - not direct

is good structure of poetry should be wind and not direct, should be difficult and sophisticated معقد? Can not good poetry be written in plain واضح and direct, clear, straightforward مباشر structure?

May no lines pass, except they do their duty
Not to a true, but painted chair?

May good lines of poetry pass from the opinions آراء of the critics; they would not approve it as good poetry till they do this duty and go through untrue images or a painted church.

painted chair= an allusion to that custom عادة- تقليد that even if a crown العرش is empty- the king is not sitting on it, still any one who would pass the crown or the picture of the crown has to bow ينحني.

2nd stanza:

Is it no verse, except enchanted groves
And sudden arbors shadow coarse-spun lines?

We have the same idea of the first stanza

Is not considered good poetry except when one would celebrate يحتفل or write about woods , nature and beautiful things or to write in a sophisticated معقد style , in a twisted متعرج lines ?

Must purling streams refresh a lover's loves?
Must all be veiled, while he that reads, divines,
Catching the sense at two removes?

Are those images of running water accepted in writing poetry? Should the meanings be hidden مخفى and one should search for them otherwise وإلا they will not be considered good poetry?

He is challenging يتحدى the tradition of writing poetry for him.

George Herbert is a metaphysical poet but not in the same way as John Donne. His images are easier and his poetry is softer. He brings some strange and weird comparisons and images. But still they are softer and easier. They do not have these sophisticated معقد structures. He is not interested in the images taken from geography and science like

John Donne

3rd stanza:

Shepherds are honest people; let them sing:
Riddle who list, for me, and pull for Prime:
I envy no man's nightingale or spring;
Nor let them punish me with loss of rime,
Who plainly say, My God, My King.

Shepherds are honest people= let us be simple – let the shepherds راعى sing.

Riddle who list, for me, and pull for Prime:= this is an allusion تلميح ضمنى for playing cards. It is as if playing puzzle لغز - احجية. Is poetry is like playing puzzles? He does not agree. He does not want to do like them man's nightingale or spring= those who are after music and rhyme. He is not after this. He does not want critics to punish يعاقب him for lacking ينقص rime. He is not after this. He wants to sing for God- for his king. He wants to sing plainly, ببساطة directly and spontaneously تلقائى.

This poem is an introduction to his poem **Jordan II-**

When George Herbert entered the holy land, he went there by himself, or in his imagination.

In the poem, he describes his feelings in the holy land, trying to find words in order to write poetry. He can not choose very simple themes like praising God . he wants just to speak out spontaneously عفوى and to put what he feels directly on the paper without paying any attention to the rhythm , rhyme or style. He wants to express himself openly بوضوح



Jordan (II).

1st stanza:

When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
Such was their lustre, they did so excell,

There is a struggle صراع between human being who is obsessed مبهوس with emotions and passions to love of God in the holy land and the role of the poet who has to write good poetry and to be accepted by critics. The struggle is between the ordinary believer المؤمن as a human being and the poet himself.

His subject matter is heavenly joys متع = joys, pleasures of being close to God. He is in the Holy Lands.

He started to write his first lines. He was so excited متحمس. Many ideas came jumping and flowing يتدفق in his head.

That I sought out quaint words and trim invention;
My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,

He started to see quaint words = appropriate مناسب words = decorated مزخرف words.

He started to search for words to express his ideas out, to try to speak out what is appropriate. His thoughts began to burnish يلمع = to expand يتمدد more and more, began to swell ينفخ. He had many ideas in his head flowing يتدفق. The ideas are crowded مزدحم in his own mind.

Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.

He was in the holy land but still metaphors were trying to wind = twist يلتوي and to twist the words which were coming out. Hundreds of words, ideas images, decorated and undecorated were crowded in his mind. He was busy to find words. As a poet, he did not know what to write. It is as if they are made to form a poem for the market to sell, to please the critics and readers. but he wants to express his feelings to God.

It is the struggle between the poet who wants to put on paper good poetry and the ordinary human being who wants to express his emotions and feelings.

2nd stanza:

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne,
Off'ring their service, if I were not sped:
I often blotted what I had begunne;
This was not quick enough, and that was dead.

The same idea is discussed **مناقش** again. Thousands of notions were under his service. He often rejected and rubbed out what he had begun. He was trying to write and change his mind and tore the paper. He is not satisfied. **راضى** These ideas were not quick enough. They were not so lively. They did not express what they had inside. It is as if dead- with no emotions. They did not express what they had in mind.

Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne,
Much lesse those joyes which trample on his head.

What he had inside was much more bigger than what he can express.

3rd stanza:

As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,
So did I weave my self into the sense.

Flames= of fire

Ascend= to go up

He was like the fire working out and full of warmth **دفئ** and full of ideas and emotions. But while he was so exited to write something, he heard a friend, whispering **يهمس** in his ears

But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
Whisper, How wide is all this long pretence!
There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd;
Copie out onely that, and save expense.

The ideas had gone so far of what he wanted to express.

readie penn'd;= ready to be written

His friend whispered in his ear telling him to copy the sweetness of what is in his heart. He had just to copy what is in his heart. He has to look in his heart to find words.

It is very simple. The images are not expected. This is the metaphysical point of George Herbert.

The whole poem discusses only one idea. In the 1st and 2nd stanza, the same idea is repeated. In the 3rd stanza, he is describing the flowing of ideas in his mind because his heart is filled with Love for God and the heavenly joys. Seeing the Holy land for the first time, being there near a place where Christ had lived. He describes how he was full of love and emotions and his mind was full of ideas to express those emotions. But he was not satisfied with any. He wrote, omitted, canceled...

In the last part of the poem, he describes himself as his head is burning with ideas like flames; his heart is burning with love. He could not express himself. Somebody whispered in his ear that he could find in love more decorated words= that he had just to look in his heart and express what it feels.



Finished