THE ENGLISH POEMS OF

GEORGE HERBERT

George Herbert (1593–1633) is widely regarded as the greatest devotional poet in the English language. His single volume of poems, *The Temple*, published posthumously in 1633, became one of the most widely read and influential devotional collections of the seventeenth century. Almost 400 years after Herbert's poems were first published by the 'printers to the Universitie', Cambridge University Press is pleased to present the definitive scholarly edition of Herbert's complete English poems, accompanied by extensive explanatory and textual apparatus. The text is meticulously annotated with historical, literary and biblical information, as well as the modern critical contexts which now illuminate the poems. In addition to the lively introduction and notes, this edition includes a glossary of key words, an index of biblical quotations, and the most authentic texts of Herbert's work.

Helen Wilcox is Professor of English at the University of Wales, Bangor.

THE ENGLISH POEMS OF GEORGE HERBERT

Edited by

HELEN WILCOX

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521868211

First published 2007
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-86821-1 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-17720-7 Paperback

— *Contents* —

— *Illustrations* —

— *Acknowledgements* —

I should like to thank the staff of the following institutions for their co-operation: The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; Dr Williams's Library, London; The British Library, London; The University Library, Cambridge; The Sydney Jones Library, Liverpool University; The University and Arts Faculty Libraries, Groningen; The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

I gratefully acknowledge the permission given by Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian Library, the British Library and the trustees of Dr Williams's Library for the printing of manuscript materials from their collections and the reproduction of the illustrations.

I wish to express with respect and gratefulness my indebtedness to all the earlier editors of Herbert, most notably the late Canon F. E. Hutchinson, who produced the Clarendon edition of Herbert's *Works* in 1941.

My thanks go to the many individuals who have shared their knowledge, insights and enthusiasm with me, or asked challenging questions, during the many years that I have been working with Herbert's poetry, and particularly to the following:

John Barnard, Nigel Bawcutt, Bernard Beatty, Diana Benet, Peter Boulton, Maureen Boyd, Cedric Brown, Meg Lota Brown, Edward Burns, Gordon Campbell, Mario Di Cesare, Amy Charles, Elizabeth Clarke, Bob Cummings, Daniel Doerksen, Henk Dragstra, Elsie Duncan-Jones, Philip Edwards, Don Fowler, Peta Fowler, Neville Frith, Sue Frith, Sid Gottlieb, Achsah Guibbory, Brean Hammond, Theo van Heijnsbergen, John Holmstrom, Emma Kirkby, David Lindley, Alasdair MacDonald, Elizabeth Mackenzie, Brian Nellist, John Ottenhoff, C. A. Patrides, Ted-Larry Pebworth, Lance Pierson, Jonathan Post, Cathy Rees, Jack Roberts, Naomi de Ruiter, Michael Schoenfeldt, Bernhard Scholz, Bill Sessions, Barbara Smith, Claude Summers, Ann Thompson, John Thompson, Richard Todd, Graeme Watson, Bart Westerweel, Bob Wilcher, David Wishart, Chauncey Wood.

I should like to thank Linda Bree, Maartje Scheltens, Alison Powell, Audrey Cotterell and their colleagues at Cambridge University Press for the support and expertise that have made it possible for this annotated edition to be published in the same city and university as the first edition of Herbert's *The Temple* in 1633.

Finally, I wish to thank my loving and tolerant family: my parents, James and

Acknowledgements

Margaret Boulton, for their confidence as well as editorial expertise; my sons, Thomas and Joseph, who have been content to grow up alongside this edition, and, above all, my husband Allan, who has unstintingly given moral, practical and intellectual support and to whom my part in this volume is gratefully dedicated.

— *Chronology* —

1593 3 April, birth of George Herbert (H.), seventh child of Richard Herbert and Magdalene Newport, at Montgomery.
Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* published.

1595 Sir Philip Sidney, *Apologie for Poetry* published (posthumously).

1596 Death of H.'s father.
Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene* (Books 1–4) and *Four Hymns* published.

1599 H.'s mother moves the family to Oxford, where H.'s elder brother Edward is studying; first known contact between the Herbert family and John Donne.
Mary Sidney presents verse translation of *Psalms* to Queen Elizabeth.

1600 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* on stage.

1601 H.'s mother moves the family to London.
Essex rebellion in London (followed by the execution of the Earl, Elizabeth I's one-time favourite).
Lancelot Andrewes becomes Dean of Westminster.

1603 Death of Elizabeth I; accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England.

1604 H. begins as day-pupil at Westminster School.

1605 H. wins scholarship and begins as boarder at Westminster School.
Ben Jonson, *Masque of Blackness* performed.
Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* published.
5 November, unsuccessful Gunpowder Plot (Palace of Westminster) to assassinate James I.

1606 Virginia Company founded.

1608 H.'s mother marries Sir John Danvers.

1609 5 May, H. enters Trinity College, Cambridge.
William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* published.

1610 H. sends two New Year Sonnets (his earliest known poetry) to his mother.

1611 *Authorised Version* of the Bible published.

1612 Death of Prince Henry, heir to the throne; H. contributes two Latin elegies to a commemorative collection in Cambridge (his first published verse).

1613 H. becomes Bachelor of Arts (ranked second out of 193 graduates in Cambridge that year).
Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I, marries Frederick the Elector Palatine, in a strategic Protestant alliance.

1614 H. becomes a minor Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.
George Chapman's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* published.

1616 H. promoted to major Fellow and Master of Arts.
Ben Jonson, Folio *Workes* published.
Death of Shakespeare.

1617 H. employed as *sublector quartae classis* (assistant lecturer) at Trinity.

1618 H. promoted to *praelector* in rhetoric.
Francis Bacon becomes Lord Chancellor of England.

1619 H. becomes deputy to the Orator of Cambridge University, Sir Francis Nethersole; H. contributes Latin elegy for Queen Anne, wife of James I, to *Lacrymae Cantabrigienses*.
H.'s brother Edward becomes ambassador in Paris.
Frederick (the Elector Palatine) and Elizabeth become King and Queen of Bohemia.

1620 H. becomes Cambridge University Orator.
Further religious wars (later known as the Thirty Years War) in central Europe: King and Queen of Bohemia ousted and sent into exile.

1621 John Donne becomes Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, London.
Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* published.

1623 12 March, H. gives oration in the presence of James I.
Francis Bacon, *De augmentis scientiae* published (Latin translation of *The Advancement of Learning*, prepared by a group of scholars including H.).
William Shakespeare, First Folio *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* published.

1624 H. elected Member of Parliament for Montgomery.
Sometime between 3 November and 6 December, H. is ordained deacon in the Church of England.
Royal Charter of the Virginia Company is revoked and Virginia becomes a Crown Colony.

1625 5 July, H. made canon of Lincoln Cathedral and prebendary of Leighton Ecclesia, Huntingdonshire (close to the religious community at Little Gidding founded by his friend Nicholas Ferrar); H. begins programme of restoration of the church.
Plague in London; H. and Donne known to have been together (in December) at H.'s mother's house in Chelsea.
H. is dedicatee of Francis Bacon's *Translation of Certaine Psalmes*.
Death of James I; accession of Charles I.

1626 Deaths of Francis Bacon and Lancelot Andrewes.

1627 Death of H.'s mother; Donne's sermon preached at her funeral published together with H.'s memorial poems *Memoriae Matris Sacrum*.

1629 5 March, H. marries Jane Danvers, cousin of his stepfather, in Wiltshire after a brief courtship.
H.'s brother Edward becomes Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

1630 26 April, H. instituted as rector of Bemerton, near Salisbury, Wiltshire.
19 September, H. ordained priest in the Church of England, at a service in Salisbury Cathedral.

1631 Death of John Donne.

1633 1 March, death of H. from consumption (buried 3 March, one month before his fortieth birthday); September, posthumous publication of H.'s *The Temple* in Cambridge.
Charles I visits Nicholas Ferrar's religious community in Little Gidding.
John Donne, *Poems* published.

1634 H.'s translation of Cornaro's *Treatise of Temperance and Sobrietie* published.

1638 H.'s 'Briefe Notes' on Valdesso's *Hundred and Ten [Divine] Considerations* published.

1640 H.'s *Outlandish Proverbs* published.

1641 6th edition of *The Temple* published, bound with Christopher Harvey's *The Synagogue, or, The Shadow of the Temple . . . In imitation of Mr George Herbert*.

1642 Civil War between Charles I and Parliament.

1643 H.'s private papers burnt at Highnam House (home of H.'s widow and her second husband, Sir Robert Cook) during a Civil War skirmish.

1646 John Milton, *Poems* published (dated 1645).

1649 End of Civil War: execution of Charles I (one of the signatories of the death warrant being H.'s stepfather).

1651 H.'s expanded collection of proverbs, *Jacula Prudentum*, published.

1652 *Herbert's Remains. Or, Sundry Pieces of that sweet singer of the Temple* published, including a prefatory biography by Barnabus Oley, H.'s *A Priest to the Temple: or, The Country Parson* and the proverbs from *Jacula Prudentum*.

1655 Henry Vaughan, *Silex scintillans* (enlarged 2nd edition) published, inspired by the 'holy *life* and *verse*' of 'the blessed man, Mr *George Herbert*'.

1656 7th edition of *The Temple* published, including an index 'for ready finding out chief places'.

1660 Restoration of the monarchy: accession of Charles II on his return from exile.

1662 H.'s *Musae Responsoriae* (written *c.* 1620) published as part of James Duport's *Ecclesiastes Solomonis*.

1670 Izaak Walton, *The Life of Mr George Herbert* published.

1674 10th edition of *The Temple* published, including Walton's *Life*, H.'s portrait (engraved by Robert White for Walton's *Life*) and engraved settings of 'Superliminare' and 'The Altar'.

1697 *Select Hymns Taken out of Mr Herbert's 'Temple'* published (anonymously).

1709 13th edition of *The Temple* published (the last until 1799).

1715 George Ryley writes *Mr Herbert's Temple and Church Militant Explained and Improved*.

For further biographical detail, see: Oley, Walton, Hutchinson, Charles, Powers-Beck, Malcolmson (2004), Dyck, Wilcox (2004).

— *Abbreviations and modes of reference* —

1633 George Herbert, *The Temple* (Cambridge, 1633), first printed edition

1633[2] George Herbert, *The Temple* (Cambridge, 1633), second edition

1634 George Herbert, *The Temple* (Cambridge, 1634), third edition. Dates given in italic in the textual notes refer to subsequent editions of *The Temple*.

B Bodleian MS Tanner 307 (The Bodleian Manuscript of Herbert's poems)

BCP *The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book*, edited by John E. Booty (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, for the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1976)

H. George Herbert

NT The New Testament (the second part of the Bible, recounting the life of Christ and the history of the early church)

OED *The Oxford English Dictionary*

OT The Old Testament (the first part of the Bible, recounting the history of the Jews and their relationship with God)

Outlandish Proverbs Herbert's collection of foreign proverbs in English, first published in *Herbert's Remains* (1652) and available in several modern editions; for ease of reference they are cited by proverb number.

Priest George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson* (London, 1652). References to this prose work are not given by page number but by *chapter* in Roman numerals (bearing in mind that it is available in many different editions).

W	Dr. Williams's Library MS Jones B 62 (The Williams Manuscript of Herbert's poems)

All references to poems by H. are given in the following form: the poem number in this edition, the poem title and line number; for example, 140 *The Collar* 6.

Where there are several poems by H. with the same title, the following modes of reference have been adopted:

(1.) Where the poems are numbered in *1633*, the roman numeral is italicised since it is part of the title, without brackets (for example, 46 *The H. Scriptures I*);

(2.) Where the poems are not numbered in *1633*, a roman numeral is provided, though in brackets and not italicised, since it is not part of the original title but an editorial addition provided for ease of reference (for example, 95 *Jordan* (II));

(3.) Where the poems of the same title were written at different periods of H.'s creative life and one of these was not included in *The Temple* but appears only in the early Williams manuscript, the title of the early version is followed by *W* in brackets (for example, 3 *The Holy Communion* (*W*)) to distinguish it from the later poem of the same name included in *The Temple*.

All biblical quotations (with the exception of *Psalms*) are taken from *The Bible: Authorised King James version* edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and are given in the form of the book title followed by chapter number in roman numerals and verse in standard (arabic) numerals; for example, *Genesis* vi 2. Where there are two or more books of the Bible with the same title, the number of the book (in an arabic numeral) appears before the italicised book title; for example, 1 *Corinthians* xiii 12. References to *Psalms* (unless indicated otherwise) are to the *Book of Common Prayer*, since this was the translation familiar to H. from liturgical use.

All quotations from Donne's poems are taken from *The Complete English Poems*, edited by C. A. Patrides (London: Dent, 1985), unless otherwise indicated.

All quotations from Shakespeare's works are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), unless otherwise indicated.

All references to works by other authors are given by author surname followed by page number. If an author's name appears more than once in the Bibliography, and one work by that author is cited more frequently than others, then this work is the default reference and is indicated in the text by the author's name without a date (and is identified in the Bibliography by the author's name appearing in square brackets at the end of the entry). Further publications by the same author are referred to in the text by the name followed by the date.

— *Introduction* —

In 1681, Richard Baxter confessed his admiration for the poetry of George Herbert, published almost fifty years earlier: '*Herbert* speaks to *God* like one that *really believeth a God . . . Heart-work* and *Heaven-work* make up his Books' (Baxter (1681) A7v). There can be few finer expressions of the appeal of this writer, widely regarded as the greatest devotional poet in English, than these seventeenth-century phrases summing up the most immediately striking aspects of Herbert's art. His lyric speakers indeed enter into poetic conversations with God, drawing in the reader, too, with their directness and apparent spontaneity – as in 'My God, I read this day' (91 *Affliction* (V) 1) and 'It cannot be. Where is that mightie joy . . . ?' (43 *The Temper* (II) 1). The tone of these openings is that of an interested or puzzled individual addressing a wise, patient and loving friend, and Herbert has recently been described as 'an ethnolinguist of the multiple tonalities available to intimate conversation' (Vendler (2005) 26). After such poetic overtures, Herbert's poems go on to argue, complain, grieve, celebrate and sing to the Lord with consummate skill. The subject of every single poem in *The Temple* is, in one way or another, God. However, this is not just an *idea* of the divine or transcendent; it is an *experience*, felt on the pulse of the human speaker. '*Heaven-work*' may seem to predominate in Herbert's lyric explorations, but Baxter was right: there is an equal amount of '*Heart-work*' to be found there, too. The poems convey an engaging human immediacy – 'My stuffe is flesh, not brasse' (82 *The Pearl* 27) – and express the doubt, anguish and joy of the best love poetry. Simone Weil considered 180 *Love* (III), the climactic lyric of *The Church*, to be 'the most beautiful poem in the world' (Patrides (1983) 35), and Herbert's other twentieth-century champions included the poets T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop and Seamus Heaney. It has been claimed, boldly yet rightly, that Herbert's artistry represents the 'high point' of Christian poetry, in which 'Christianity and human nature, language and personal depth and musical skill, most perfectly coincide' (Levi 20).

'*Trim invention*'

How did all this come about? George Herbert, seventeenth-century orator, priest and poet, was a paradoxical man. He was said by his brother Edward to suffer from the Herbert family's weakness of a short temper – or, as he put it, 'passion and Choler' (Cherbury (1976) 9) – and Herbert's seventeenth-century biographer, Walton, noted that 'his cloaths seem'd to prove, that he put too great a value on his

parts and parentage' (Walton 22). Both these writers, however, also observed that Herbert was virtually a saint in his own lifetime. Coming from a fine family, he did not achieve the court career that might have been expected for him, but instead became the priest of the country parish of Bemerton, near Salisbury (a paradox that challenges all Herbert's biographers). Skilled in rhetoric, distinguished as the public orator of Cambridge University and a writer of complex, even baroque, Latin verse of polemic and praise, Herbert's fame rests on his English verse that openly abandons the temptation of 'sweet phrases, lovely metaphors' (167 *The Forerunners*) and embraces an aesthetic of plainness, asserting the 'beauty' that is in truth itself (44 *Jordan* (I)). Herbert was among the most learned of his generation in classics and theology, yet he collected homely proverbs and, in his own poetry, draws as much on common wisdom as he does on the works of Greek and Roman writers or the Church Fathers; in his prose handbook *A Priest to the Temple*, he advised the country parson to have a library consisting, not of books, but of 'a holy Life' (*Priest* xxxiii). These contraries, strengthened by the 'bitter-sweet' paradoxes already present in the Christian faith, form the foundation of his uniquely attractive art. One further paradox about Herbert is that his very particular and admired poetic 'invention', a triumph of subtlety and plainness combined, is presented as though it were a process of discovery rather than creation: as the voice of the divine 'friend' explains to him, 'There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd: Copie out onely that, and save expense' (95 *Jordan* (II) 17–18). Herbert's poetic fabric is all the stronger for being woven from these fundamental paradoxes; it is a compound of 'integrity in complexity' (Clarke (1992) 143), combining wit with transparency, and sharp irony with an achieved sincerity.

One of the most fascinating and paradoxical features of Herbert's *Temple* as a whole is the simultaneous sense it gives of order and randomness. On the one hand, the poetic sequence is carefully and architecturally structured, with its three sections *The Church-porch, The Church* and *The Church Militant* logically taking the reader from social morality, via inner spiritual experience to the apocalyptic future of religion. Within *The Church* there are patterns and clusters of poems, such as those tracing the individual's progress through a church building (55 *Church-monuments*, 59 *The Windows*), following the festivals of the liturgical year (28 *Easter*, 60 *Trinitie Sunday*) or experiencing the daily or weekly services of the Church of England (38 *The H. Communion*, 52 *Mattens*). On the other hand, the poetic sequence is never so tightly structured as to prevent the spontaneity of shifting moods, from sheer delight in the company of God to the frustrated cry 'No more, I will abroad' (140 *The Collar* 1–2). *The Temple* explores the full range of spiritual experience, not only in the opposite extremes of God's 'Killing and quickning, bringing down to hell / And up to heaven in an houre' (152 *The Flower* 16–17) but also in the very instability of those occasional vitalising joys: 'How

should I praise thee, Lord . . . / If what my soul doth feel sometimes, / My soul might ever feel!' (42 *The Temper* (I) 1, 3–4). As the speaker in 151 *The Crosse* 31–2 exclaims, 'Ah my deare Father, ease my smart! / These contrarieties crush me'. The intense longing and painful misery, fervour and inadequacy of Herbert's 'Poore silly soul' (103 *Vanitie* (II) 1) express all the familiar disorders of passionate human love.

The Temple owes a great deal to the sonnet sequences of worldly love that were all the rage at the time of Herbert's youth. At first, his attitude towards them was antagonistic: writing just after the publication of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, the sixteen-year-old Herbert, addressing God in a sonnet of his own, asked '*Doth Poetry / Wear* Venus *Livery? only serve her turn? / Why are not* Sonnets *made of thee*?' (1 'New Year Sonnets' (I) 3–5). While Herbert's mature poetry sometimes appears to reject the very idea of attempting to honour God in human language – since 'Thy word is all, if we could spell' (152 *The Flower* 21) – his collection does in fact contain fifteen sonnets 'made of thee'. Herbert adapted the forms of secular love poetry – both poetic and musical – to his divine subject. In 173 *A Parodie*, for example, he undertook a 'contrafactum', rewriting a worldly love poem with a new and sacred subject, to be sung to the same tune as the secular original. Several of Herbert's most striking poems recall sonnets from the sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, written before Herbert's birth by his distant kinsman, Sir Philip Sidney. But where Sidney's words praised Stella, a woman with eyes like stars, Herbert's lyrics take their inspiration from the 'book of starres' which is the Bible (47 *The H Scriptures II* 14); and while the muse tells Astrophil, 'Look in thy heart, and write' (*Astrophil and Stella* i 14), a 'friend' tells the struggling poet in 95 *Jordan* (II) 15–18 to find his text in the 'love' of Christ. In his conversion of secular art into love poetry addressed to God, Herbert took the language that knew only 'stews and brothels' and 'Brought [it] to Church well drest and clad' (167 *The Forerunners* 15, 17).

The reclamation of poetry for spiritual purposes was no drab project in the hands of a resourceful poet like Herbert. *The Temple* is bursting with variety and ingenuity, hardly repeating the same stanza form in more than one hundred and fifty lyrics in the central section, *The Church*, and writing not only sonnets but also prayers, meditations, hymns, anagrams, allegories, and poems in forms made specifically to represent their subject. It is as though every dimension of poetry should be brought into the active service of God. One of the most memorable features of this 'utmost art' (135 *Praise* (II) 9) is Herbert's creative use of the visual impact of a poem, treating it as a 'hieroglyph' (Summers 123). The first poem of *The Church* presents the reader with the shape of an altar, and 'reares' up verbal 'stones' that meet in the 'frame' of the poem to praise God (19 *The Altar*). To mark the festival of Easter, when the resurrection of Christ is celebrated and matched in

the rising heart of the poet, a pair of wing-shaped poems express and enact the spiritual 'fall' and 'flight' on the page (29 *Easter wings*). This matching of form to subject – an aspect of Herbert's poetry that did not endear him to neo-classical readers such as Dryden – is not an isolated phenomenon, limited to a few shaped poems, but a fundamental principle of Herbert's art. If poetry is to honour Christ, the 'Word made flesh' (*John* i 14), then the writer's language must be similarly incarnate: alive and embodied. Herbert's collection is full of witty forms which surprise the reader into contemplating their significance – such as the 'pruned' words of 122 *Paradise*, and the diagonally embedded biblical text of 78 *Coloss 3.3*. But many of Herbert's poems that do not obviously mimic their subject in their visual form nevertheless work on the principle of the multi-dimensional efficacy of words. This is demonstrated in the small poem 105 *JESU*, where the broken heart of the afflicted speaker causes the name 'Jesu' to break into fragments that re-form to create a sentence of reassurance: 'I ease you' (9). Language forms, and transforms, spiritual experience.

Herbert's grammar of salvation squeezes the maximum significance out of words. Poetry is poised at the boundary of the visual and the aural, and *The Temple* is not only a picture gallery but a place of singing, resounding with verse referred to by the poet as 'My musick' (81 *Vertue* 11), with 'Harmonious bells' (164 *Aaron* 3) and chiming sounds. We know that Herbert played and sang (and set his own songs to) music, and that he was greatly moved by liturgical music, the 'sweetest of sweets' (56 *Church-musick* 1). The inspiration of music is not only present in the metaphors of his lyrics but is intrinsic to their very nature (McColley, Schleiner). His stanza forms use the metrical structures of lute songs; his titles refer to the generic modes of liturgical music (39 *Antiphon* (I), 162 *The 23 Psalme*, 155 *A true Hymne*), and his spiritual aim is to enact the harmonies of three parts 'vied and multiplied' (28 *Easter* 15–16) in order to mend the 'broken consort' (177 *Doomsday* 29) of human disorder. The music of language itself is most clearly at work in 73 *Deniall*, where Herbert uses sound – both rhythm and rhyme – to symbolise a state of despair: 'Then was my heart broken, as was my verse' (3). The stanza form, like the speaker's soul, is 'Untun'd, unstrung' (22), until in the closing lines the complaint turns to the prayer that Christ's 'favours' and 'my minde may chime, / And mend my ryme' (28–30). The restored rhyme, reinforced by the multiple assonances and flowing rhythm of the lines, is emblematic of the restored relationship with God. No detail of sound, or metaphor of music, is overlooked in these 'window-songs' (108 *Dulnesse* 18) to God.

As *Deniall* has reminded us, Herbert's poems make splendid use of their last lines – or, as Herbert calls them in a reference to musical cadences, their 'closes' (81 *Vertue* 11). In 34 *Affliction* (I), after more than sixty lines of narrative and complaint, the speaker collapses into riddling submission: 'Let me not love thee,

if I love thee not.' In 140 *The Collar*, after more than thirty lines of rebellion and distress, the speaker hears 'one calling, *Childe*: / And I reply'd, *My Lord*', thereby restoring the rhyme (as in the conclusion of *Deniall*). There are many dramas of deferred resolution in *The Temple* (Weatherford (1993)), including the very last poem of *The Church*, 180 *Love* (III), in which the speaker finally accepts, in the closing line, the banquet of Love: 'So I did sit and eat.' These are powerful poetic effects, often associated in *The Temple* with a divine voice whose intervention towards the end of a poem resolves the writer's dilemma, as in 95 *Jordan* (II), or startles the narrator with the assurance of salvation, as in the last half-line of 26 *Redemption*. Being a leading orator of his generation, Herbert knew the value of the rhetorical climax, and indeed his poetry displays a thorough and sensitive control of form, as, for example, in the repeated yet gradually altered refrain lines of 81 *Vertue*. From a familiar *carpe diem* motif of transience – the day 'must die' – via an inclusive 'all must die', the refrain is converted in the last line into a dynamic and forward-looking assertion about the 'vertuous soul', which 'Then chiefly lives'.

In an encircling movement that is typical of Herbert's integrated aesthetic forms, the final stanza of *Vertue* returns us to its title, having provided us with a new perception of its significance – in this case, that virtue is not only more truly 'sweet' than spring days and roses; it is strong, and defiant of mortality. The experience of reading Herbert's lyrics is often a process of unpacking the compressed meanings crammed into their titles. It is important to realise (as Bauer 107 has pointed out) that the use of titles other than 'Song' or 'Sonnet' for short lyric poems was one of Herbert's greatest 'inventions', a new phenomenon that noticeably influenced the poets who followed him, and added yet another dimension to a poem's insight and effectiveness in his hands. Some of his titles are rich puns (a gift of the English language which he praises in 154 *The Sonne*), enabling him to highlight the complexity of the poem. *The Collar*, for instance, contains the words 'caller' and 'choler', as well as 'collar' in its biblical and worldly meanings (see 140 *The Collar: Title*). Other titles in *The Temple* illuminate the meanings of their poems in the way that early modern visual 'emblems' were related to their verses: like allegorical engravings, the titles create images (such as that of 147 *The Pulley*) that then require meditation and explication in the course of the poems themselves. But perhaps the most common, and significant, function of Herbert's titles is their capacity to trick the reader (often along with the speaker) into a limited interpretation of their meaning, and then to evolve as the poem proceeds. This was true of 81 *Vertue*, as we have noted, and it is undoubtedly the case with 73 *Deniall*, that troubled poem which begins with the perception that God denies the speaker any access or comfort, but concludes with the realisation that it is the speaker who has been denying both God's presence and his healing access to the speaker's 'heartless breast'. The title is thus pivotal

to the change of perspective enacted both in the poem and within the reader. This is 'trim invention' (95 *Jordan* (II) 1) at its best.

'This book of starres'

How should we approach Herbert's work? The unfamiliar reader is perhaps best advised to begin with *The Church*, the collection of exquisite lyrics that forms the heart of *The Temple* (and whose life-like mixture of order and randomness was highlighted above). The sequence begins with poems meditating on the suffering of Christ and the subsequent joys of Easter, and then opens out into an exploration of the sufferings and joys of the individual believer, often supported by the church in sacraments and liturgical festivals, but more frequently experiencing the dread of uncertainty and spiritual isolation. Herbert is said to have described his poems as '*a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have past betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master*' (Walton 74), and it is certainly significant that, of all the clusters of poems sharing the same title, the largest is the five lyrics entitled *Affliction*. However, the climax of the sequence comes in a series of poems on death and the 'Last Things', from which it emerges into the serenity of the reassuring final lyric, 180 *Love* (III).

Although it is a rewarding experience to read *The Church* as a whole and in sequence, it is more likely that readers will be drawn initially to individual lyrics, but even then it is enriching to read the few poems preceding and following the one in question, since the interaction within clusters of poems is a vital feature of *The Church* (Summers (1978)). At times the sequence may appear random, but there is always enlightenment to be found in proximity in Herbert's *Temple* – for example, the closeness of 140 *The Collar* (or caller) to 143 *The Call*, and the fact that 150 *Grief* and 151 *The Crosse* are immediately followed by 152 *The Flower*, celebrating Christ's refreshing 'returns' (2) and the speaker's delighted amazement that 'Grief melts away / Like snow in May' (5–6). In fact, no poem in *The Church* stands alone: each is connected with many other poems in the sequence by means of repeated titles, shared vocabulary and communal biblical or liturgical sources. Herbert's model for this interconnectedness is the Bible itself, that 'book of starres' (47 *The H. Scriptures II* 14) in which 'each verse doth shine' (3) but will do so even more effectively when the 'book' is viewed as a whole. The reader of the Bible, Herbert suggests, must seek to understand how these 'lights combine' (1) into 'all the constellations of the storie' (4). In this mutually illuminating structure of cross-references, 'This verse marks that, and both do make a motion / Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie' (5–6). An appropriate openness to such harmonies and echoes among the poems of *The Temple* will help the reader to enjoy the fullness of Herbert's lyrics.

If *The Church* is a poetic echo-chamber, then the poems within it are not only echoing one another but also the shared scriptural context to which they refer. The most important source for all Herbert's writing is the Bible. This is not to say that his poems are in any way derivative or over-reliant on scriptural texts, but they do make the most of them through a playful and inventive interaction. As Chana Bloch notes in her excellent study of Herbert and the Bible, 'the poems of *The Temple* owe their distinctive character to Herbert's immersion in Scripture', yet the poet's imaginative engagement with the Bible allows him to write works of 'astonishing freshness' even while being 'so deeply indebted to traditional materials' (4, 112). The freshness of Herbert's approach is emphatically to be seen in 78 *Coloss. 3. 3*, in which the quotation from St Paul's letter to the Colossians is embedded diagonally within Herbert's text, 'hid' from a regular horizontal reading but nonetheless present in the texture of the poem. As well as enacting the meaning of the scriptural quotation ('*Our life is hid with Christ in God*'), this individual poem encapsulates the constant presence of the Bible in *all* Herbert's poems. In this sense, too, 'Thy word is all' (152 *The Flower* 21) for Herbert as poet.

It is clear that this presence of the sacred 'word' in *The Temple* is derived, not simply from Herbert's private study of the Bible, but primarily from the experience of regular liturgical readings from scripture. This is confirmed by the fact that, where his poetry makes use of *Psalms*, it is almost invariably in the language of the *Book of Common Prayer* version that was sung during worship. In addition, many of his poems echo the particular psalms and readings specified for the services, feast days or seasons of the liturgical year that have inspired them. In a memorably witty interaction with familiar biblical sources, the speaker in the second part of 28 *Easter* confesses to being too late to greet the risen Christ on Easter morning, and in doing so makes use of the unusual verb 'to straw' that occurs in the gospel reading for Palm Sunday, a week *before* Easter! The speaker is thus a week late in the remembered biblical vocabulary, neatly demonstrating the lyric's fundamental point about human imperfection.

Herbert's biblical inspiration is often what we might call subterranean – hidden, as in 78 *Coloss. 3. 3*, deep within the workings of the text. His musical lyric, 85 *Antiphon* (II), for example, recalls the first verse of *Psalms* cvi in its opening stanza, but towards its conclusion, after several stanzas – and a number of intervening links from elsewhere in the Bible – the poem echoes the second verse of the original psalm, thereby suggesting that this particular biblical context has been quietly underlying the poem throughout its development. The consistently close relationship between Herbert's *The Temple* and the *Psalms of David* should come as no surprise: in the early modern period, the fact that the psalms were sanctioned within the Bible was used to justify the very existence of poetry (Sidney, *Apology* 99), and the *1633* title-page of *The Temple* features an epigraph

from *Psalms* xxix, '*In his Temple doth every man speak of his honour*.' After his death, Herbert himself became known as a second David, the 'sweet singer of the Temple' (Oley a11v), and it continues to be of great significance to their widespread appeal that Herbert's lyrics are psalm-like in their musicality, in their variety of mood and in their capacity to express the spiritual ups and downs of many a reader. The most important literary influence on Herbert's poetic forms was undoubtedly the translation of *Psalms* by Mary Sidney and her brother Philip, and the parallels between Herbert's poems and the psalms even include the numerical, in that the number of poems in *The Church* is the same as that of the psalms as divided up for liturgical use in the Church of England calendar (Wall 170). In voice, mode and experience, Herbert's debt to the psalmist is unmistakable, particularly at the key moments of his arguments. When he debates the nature of poetry, and upholds the right of the poet to 'plainly say, *My God, My King*' (44 *Jordan* (I) 15), this final phrase, which clinches his case, is not Herbert's own but an echo of several psalms, as the relevant footnote explains. God, through David, is the model of lyric honesty and craftsmanship in *The Temple*, and Herbert 'reveals his indebtedness to David the poet at the same time that he realizes his intention to write beautiful poems of his own' (Targoff 95).

Although Herbert's 'beautiful' poems in English are richly biblical and almost exclusively concerned with the Christian faith (for the four exceptions, see poems 9–12), many would agree with T.S. Eliot that it would be 'a gross error to assume that Herbert's poems are of value only for Christians' (25). The clarity, range and intensity of the emotions so vividly evoked in Herbert's lyrics ensure that they will touch any reader's sense of affliction and love. As Miller 163 put it, these are not poems 'about' religion; they are simply 'infused with it'. Herbert's one short lyric of overtly doctrinal debate, 3 *The H. Communion* (*W*), was replaced in *The Temple* by a more experiential poem in which Herbert's position regarding the Eucharist is communicated indirectly, by means of conversation and narrative, while 'by way of nourishment and strength / Thou [Christ] creep'st into my breast' (38 *The H. Communion* 7–8).

The poems convey an overwhelming sense of an 'infused' and indwelling God, attentive as a 'friend' (86 *Unkindnesse*) and much more loving than dogmatic. The presence of God in the poems is also anticipatory, always several steps ahead of the troubled narrators in their experiences. Although the poems enact plenty of 'loud complaints and pulling fears' (126 *The Familie* 3), their speakers never confront an affliction that has not already been suffered by Christ. The complainant in 21 *The Thanksgiving* asks in some desperation, 'how shall I grieve for thee, / Who in all grief preventest me?', suggesting that Christ not only protects the speaker from grief but also, more importantly, goes before his followers ('pre-vents') and experiences that grief on their behalf. In 26 *Redemption*, Christ has 'granted' the

speaker's 'suit' before it could even be asked for, while the unhappy narrator of 66 *Affliction* (III), whose heart 'did heave, and there came forth, O God!', discovers in this experience that 'thou [Christ] wast in the grief'. Sorrow and solace go hand in hand in virtually all Herbert's verses.

Despite these reassurances, Herbert's speakers are frequently anxious and uncertain – sensing the human state as 'brittle crazie glasse' (59 *The Windows* 2) – and sometimes grumblingly rebellious. However, even when they do throw out a challenge to God, it is – almost as though unwittingly – expressed in the language of Christ's passion and the eucharistic bread and wine. As the speaker in 140 *The Collar* asks in desperation, 'Have I no harvest but a thorn / To let me bloud . . .? Sure there was wine / Before my sighs did drie it: there was corn / Before my tears did drown it' (7–8, 10–12). Indeed, Christ's redemptive sacrifice (with bloodshed caused in part by the crown of thorns), and the resultant 'wine' and 'corn' of the Eucharist, frame and inspire *The Church* (see Ross, Whalen). The first poem of the sequence is 19 *The Altar*, and the last, 180 *Love* (III), welcomes the narrator to the heavenly banquet. As C.A. Patrides wisely observed, the Eucharist is referred to so frequently in *The Church* that it may be seen as the 'marrow of Herbert's sensibility' (Patrides 17).

The real difficulty for the speakers in these lyrics lies not so much in recognising this gift of grace – which manifests itself throughout the sequence in the language of 'cordials' and 'sweetness' (see *Glossary*) – as simply in accepting it as a gift, rather than a privilege to be worked for. In 8 *Perseverance*, one of the early lyrics that appear only in the Williams manuscript (*W*), Herbert observes that 'the poor expressions of my love' are all that 'for the present I did move, / Or rather as thou moved'st me' (1, 3–4), acknowledging that God is the mover behind *all* actions. This dilemma is most thoroughly explored in one of Herbert's sonnets, 132 *The Holdfast*, whose title suggests that the speaker wants to hold on tightly to some kind of role in the drama of salvation, whether by observing God's 'strict decree', by trusting in 'him alone', or confessing that God is the 'succour' of human beings (1, 4, 8). The sonnet turns, however, on a statement that is deeply disconcerting for the speaker, who wishes to be more than passive: 'But to have nought is ours, not to confesse / That we have nought' (9–10). The resolution to this problem – the question of how salvation is effected or received, a crucial issue at the core of Reformation debates – comes once again from the reassuring advice of a 'friend', who tells 'That all things [are] more ours by being his' (12). Christ, 'who cannot fail or fall' (14), is the true 'Holdfast', the reliably loving and patient 'friend' in *The Church* who fulfils the types and prophecies of the Old Testament and replaces old fears with new confidence, just as he transforms even death, that 'uncouth hideous thing', into something 'fair and full of grace' (176 *Death* 1, 15). At the end of *The Church*, Christ is personified as Love itself, the 'quick-ey'd' figure of welcoming forgiveness who takes the reluctant soul by the hand, 'sweetly' urging this human

guest to 'taste my meat', the food which is at once the Eucharist and the heavenly banquet. In the very last line, though not before (as we noted in the discussion of Herbert's endings), the speaker does, finally, 'sit and eat'.

Although readers new to Herbert may find *The Church* the most appealing section of *The Temple* with which to begin, the contribution of the two other sections should not be underestimated. Despite the fact that the relationship between *The Church-porch, The Church Militant* and the lyrics of *The Church* remains unclear (as discussed in *A Note on the text* and in the headnotes to the respective sections), the two long poems which precede and follow the lyrics do show Herbert's mastery of a range of poetic modes. The overtly didactic manner of 17 *The Church-porch* reminds us of Herbert's interest in popular wisdom, also demonstrated in his collection of foreign sayings or *Outlandish Proverbs*. The poem presents worldly wisdom as the threshold to personal faith. The English poet Wendy Cope has summed up this long opening poem as a 'rhyming sermon' and a 'self-help manual' in 'brilliantly epigrammatic verse' (Cope xx), and her enthusiasm for this 'delightful' work certainly counters the general assumption that no modern reader can enjoy this initiation into *The Temple*. The unashamedly deceptive method of Herbert's poetry is declared here: to 'make a bait of pleasure' (4) by which the reader might be caught and brought to faith. The couplet at the end of the first stanza, 'A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies, / And turn delight into a sacrifice' (5–6), makes no attempt to hide this purpose, and in the seventeenth century (as Robert Ray demonstrates) it was one of the most frequently cited extracts from *The Temple*. Herbert wrote in an era when the chief credential of literature was its capacity to change lives for the better, whether through the mirroring and cathartic effects of drama, or via the moral didacticism of books. If the Bible is a 'book of starres' that 'lights to eternal blisse' (47 *The H. Scriptures II* 14), Herbert's own poetic 'book of starres' had a comparable, if necessarily more modest, purpose (Wilcox (1984)). For, as Walton reports, Herbert's poems were '*made publick*' by Nicholas Ferrar after the poet's death on the grounds that they would '*turn to the advantage of [a] dejected poor Soul*' and '*enrich the World with pleasure and piety*' (74–5). As Wood (2002/3) 36 has pointed out, 'Because we have not had the vast devotional literature of the period in clear view we have tended to see the poems solely as art' and to overlook Herbert's concern with teaching.

The Church Militant, which was – like *The Church-porch* – a relatively early composition, completes the symmetry of *The Temple* with a demonstration of Herbert at work in yet another mode: prophecy. Just as the Bible ends with the prophetic *Book of Revelation* and the promise of judgement, *The Temple* ends with a history of the church on earth and a revelatory vision of judgement on its corruption and sinfulness. Like *The Church-porch*, this outspoken and at times satirical poem also