EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

Herbert, The Church and Consensual Conformism: 'God is more there, then thou'

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Introduction

George Herbert's collection of poetry foregrounds the significance of religious buildings in its title, *The Temple*, as well as in the first two subtitles of that collection: 'The Church-Porch' and 'The Church'. Herbert's book draws imaginatively upon the sense that the church as building was a sacred space in which experiential access to the divine might be obtainable. *The Temple* portrays an often fraught relationship between the Christian and God, in which speakers can suffer greatly from feeling at a remove from the divine. The speaker of 'The Search' asks God 'Whither, O, wither art thou fled, / My Lord […] My searches are my daily bread; / Yet never prove' and 'Where is my God? what hidden place / Conceals thee still?'[1] These words illustrate the frustration associated with yearning for God's proximity in the face of 'thy [i.e. God's] absence' (l. 57). But there are also moments of joy in which Herbert's speakers seem to sense God's proximity; such moments are often associated with the church/Church.[2] While there are other paths to the divine for Herbert's speakers, such as scripture, this paper focuses Herbert's articulation of the church/Church as a means for humans to reach God and how that articulation is rooted in an era of ideological instability.[3]

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[1] George Herbert, *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941; corrected reprint 1945), ll. 1-4 & 29-30, pp. 162-3. All unreferenced citations appearing in parentheses are from this edition.

[2] I use the lower case in *c*hurch to signify the building in contradistinction to the institution: the *C*hurch.

[3] Various strategies for the Christian to reach for God (including the use of scripture) are dealt with in Christopher de Warrenne Waller, *Distance and Dealings between the Christian and God in the Poetry of George Herbert: 'Wilt Thou Meet Arms with Man?'* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bristol, 2015).

The idea of an ecclesiastical path to God begs the question as to what kind of Church could fulfil such a role. Precisely what the English Church should be was subject to contention in complex ways. As Charles Prior points out in his study on Jacobean Church debates, 'Protestant thought was not consensual, but was driven by its own internal dynamic… [T]he principal cleavage was not between "denominations" but between proponents of rival visions of a single institution'.[4] Historiography has recourse to terms like 'reformist', 'puritan', 'anglican', 'conformist' in order to make sense of these divisions.[5] Such terms are indispensable but they are abstractions and individuals participate in them in their own way. Moreover, despite divisions in Jacobean Protestantism there were, as Gary Kuchar argues, vistas of rapprochements among divines as diverse as Richard Sibbes and Lancelot Andrewes: the 'early reformation emphasis on scripture's monological clarity and the Pauline idea that assurance comes by faith alone' gave way to concerns about 'scriptural mystery' that transcended ideological divides.[6] Members of the same institution, sharing many assumptions, struggled with the linguistic means at their disposal to understand religious questions and to express their different positions.[7] Among those members, Herbert partakes of both his era's ideological contentions and its shared Protestant (and broader Christian) culture. The tension between his desire to affirm his vision for the Church and his desire for ecclesiastical consensus runs through his work.

Herbert's lyrical poetry focuses on personal spirituality which Christians of different orientations could identify with, thanks to its meticulous artistry.[8] *The Temple*'s art includes a didactic strain guiding readers diachronically through its exploration of devotional life with its difficulties and opportunities for transcendence; at both the 'micro' level of individual poems, where reading approximates spiritual meditation, and the 'macro' level of entering Herbert's textual church and concluding in his church

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[4] Charles W. A. Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 264.

[5] These terms are sometimes qualified by 'radical', 'moderate' or 'avant-garde'.

[6] Gary Kuchar, *George Herbert and the Mystery of the Word: Poetry and Scripture in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave, 2017), p. 26.

[7] See Brian Cummings for whom 'Reformation' denotes how 'religion in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, throughout Europe, regardless of a particular polity in force at one time, protestant or catholic […] was in crisis', *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 7.

[8] As Gary Kuchar comments, 'religious poetry provided further avenues of expression for those who were wary of dogmatism and exclusivism but were nevertheless deeply committed to spiritual transformation, Christian fellowship and the beauty of holiness' (*George Herbert and the Mystery of the Word*, p. 15).

militant.[9] While guiding readers through his *Temple* Herbert presents his ideas about the correct religiosity which, ultimately, he hopes will influence them. In Part I, I show how Herbert's religiosity aligns with the ecclesiastical current known as conformism. Conformism was a branch of English Protestantism which sought to keep, reinforce or revive traditional aspects of Church life rooted in the pre-Reformation, and insisted on the authority of the English monarch, in conjunction with Bishops. Conformists were at odds with reformists who sought a Church answering to scripture alone, an abolition of idolatry, an intensification of the Reformation (incomplete in their eyes) and less Episcopalian authority. I argue for an understanding of George Herbert as a *consensual* conformist. In so doing, I underscore a discrepancy with Archbishop Laud's *divisive* conformism – a divisiveness which contributed to civil conflict in the sixteen forties.[10] The idea of Herbert's consensual conformism accords with views of Herbert's doctrinal inclusivism that have emerged among scholars (see below, section i).

Herbert's conformism is also consensual through his means of expression which shuns polemics and often positions itself in an indirect manner (see section ii). Chapter 24 of 'A Priest to the Temple, or The Country Parson', 'The Parson arguing' (pp. 262-3), points to a distinctly Herbertian aversion to disputation. The parson should face Catholic ('Papist') and separatist ('Schismatick') arguments with a prepared discourse.[11] Topics might include elements of Church ceremony thought not to be explicitly sanctioned in scripture and so considered 'things […] indifferent' or *adiaphora* and subject to Church authority according to conformists. Herbert takes the conformist view,[12] but it is *how* he defends his view that I wish to highlight. The parson is 'unmoved in arguing, and voyd of all contentiosnesse'. His authority comes from calm self-control and avoiding heated argument, as well as from 'a strict religious life' and 'an humble, and ingenuous search of truth'. *The Temple* too defends the Church's authority with plain language, pious humility and an intelligence that cautiously avoids technicalities or precision on, say, the Church's Episcopalian profile.[13] Herbert's verse

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[9] For 'the diachrony of religious experience' in reading see Gary Kuchar, 'Introduction: Distraction and the Ethics of Poetic Form in The Temple', *Christianity & Literature*, 66.1 (2016), 4–23 (p. 19).

[10] Patrick Collinson, based on Bishop Hall's pessimistic prognostications in 1622, suggests that 'Archbishop Laud was indeed the greatest calamity ever visited on English Church', at *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625: The Ford Lectures 1979* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 90.

[11] '[T]he Parson hath diligently examined these two with himelfe'; see 'The Country Parson' (hereafter *CP*), p. 262.

[12] See *CP*: 'the obscurity in some points being the exercise of the Church' (p. 263).

[13] *CP* simply assumes that 'Diocesan' (Bishopric) authority is to be respected (p. 253).

is conformist in its insistence on edification, comeliness and reverence,[14] yet it expresses these sentiments without leaping into the fray on controversies about the surplice, kneeling at Communion, the use of the sign of the cross at baptism – even though Herbert does have identifiable opinions on the last two.

That said, Herbert's consensualism is partly strategic. The same chapter of 'The Country Parson' is clear that the parson's aim is 'to reduce […] to common Faith' those 'of his parish that hold strange Doctrins'; he must 'fit his discourse to them, that it may effectually pierce their hearts, and convert them'. However consensual the means, the end of Herbertian discourse is persuasion. Thus, Herbert's consensualism has its limits. His rejection of some positions, often subtle, is less so when dealing with the puritans he saw as threatening Church unity.

In Part II, I focus on Herbert's literary representation of the Church's sacred space as an intermediary between God and Christians. Reading *The Temple* is akin to the experience of entering a sacred precinct. This hallowed space is both reinforced by the sacred rites that take place in church and complemented by the Church's sacralising of time. Herbert is not a systematic political or ecclesiastical philosopher; nevertheless, through literary means *The Temple* articulates a cohesive view of the Church's role as a link between humanity and God.

Although Herbert's *Temple* appears to promise a mystical contact with the divine, in Part III we witness Herbert's doubts about the Church's purity. Church rite is no mechanical meeting with God: the availability of divine presence in the church does not exonerate Christians from humbling self-scrutiny. Humility goes hand in hand with obedience to a Church that can temporarily cleanse sin which is itself the burden of God's remoteness. 'The Church Militant', underscoring the underlying fragility of all human religious endeavours, shows that the Church is indispensable, but not infallible.

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[14] 'At the centre of the case in support of ceremonies […] was the idea that the visible church through the ages had established incidental aspects of ceremonial practice, and that the Hampton Court conference had merely continued this tradition by substituting "reverence", "edification", and "comliness" for superstition and error'. See Prior, p. 172.

Part I. Herbert's Church Politics

i. Herbert's Consensual Conformism

The Church was both the assembly (*ekklesia*) of believers and a polity with a secular governor, the monarch, at its head. Mainstream English society (excluding separatists and Catholics) accepted this situation. Yet within that consensus some emphasised divine authority bound up with royal and Episcopalian legitimacy (conformists) while others thought that the assembly of believers answered foremost to the divine authority of scripture (reformists – including puritans). Historians once thought that puritans were a revolutionary party on a rise from the Elizabethan era up to the civil war.[15] This 'Whiggish' narrative was challenged by 'revisionism', which argued that puritans, far from wanting to overthrow the old order, had become absorbed into the establishment and sought to conserve the religious status quo that came under attack with the innovations of William Laud and Charles I in the 1630s.[16] Although revisionism has effectively overthrown the previous Whiggish narrative, subsequent historians have challenged the idea that Laudian innovations were as innovatory as revisionists suggest by highlighting continuity between conformism and Laud.[17] Indeed, from the late Elizabethan period to the civil war Protestant debates encompassed those seeking greater reform based upon a strictly scriptural legitimacy and those seeking to retain or reinforce traditional Church practices and institutions. Early Stuart historiography's post-revisionist moment raises interesting questions about Herbert; not least of which concerns his relation to conformism.

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[15] Samuel Rawson Gardiner's *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642* (1884) propounds a Whiggish narrative, to which Christopher Hill gives a Marxist twist in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964). See also William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism or, The Way to the New Jerusalem as Set Forth in Pulpit and Press from Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton, 1570-1643* (New York: Harper, 1957).

[16] Patrick Collinson describes the consolidation of the late Elizabethan consensus in *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). Nicholas Tyacke sees Arminianism as a counter-revolutionary innovation in 'Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution' in *The Origins of the English Revolution*, ed. by Conrad Russell (London: Macmillan Press, 1973), pp. 119-43, and *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

[17] Anne Hughes and Richard Cust, eds, *Conflict in Early Modern Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642* (London: Longman, 1989); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans: Presbyterianism and English Conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988) and Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993). Emphasising that Conformism was as Protestant as the Protestantism of its critics who taxed it as 'Popish', it has been argued by Kathryn Walls that 'the agreement between Baspoole and Herbert' shows 'how genuinely Protestant Laudians could be', '"Resorting to Sermons": The Place of Preaching in William Baspoole's The Pilgrime and George Herbert's The Country Parson', *GHJ*, 30 (2006/2007), 42-58 (p. 56).

Herbert's views, although not Laudian, fit into the conformist continuity that led to Laudianism. Doctrinally, from the latter half of Elizabeth's reign onwards there was, as Dewey Wallace puts it, an 'emerging "Anglican" school of theology', exemplified by John Overall, Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne, who were 'out of step with' reformists like William Perkins and William Whitaker on issues such as 'strict and scholastic predestinarianism'.[18] The term 'Anglican' is, strictly speaking, anachronistic. Other scholars prefer the term 'conformism'; I will follow that convention. Conformists had their differences as well as their similarities. Unlike Donne, who does not hesitate in 'The Litanie' to call on spiritual intermediaries of Mary, saints and angels,[19] Herbert's speaker in 'To all Angels and Saints' has gone further down the Reformation path than erstwhile Catholic Donne. He eschews such intermediaries (albeit reluctantly: 'alas') because 'But now (alas!) I dare not; for our King, / Whom we do all jointly adore and praise / Bids no such thing' (ll. 16-18). These modes of worship are adiaphora and fall under royal-ecclesiastical 'prerogative' (l. 21); the king's 'injunction' (l. 19) ruled against them. If the poem focuses more on the blurring of divine and human kingship than on the specific doctrinal question of intermediaries, it may be because Herbert's practice did not accord with the poem's view on saints, since for his parson baptism is 'done both in the presence of God, and his Saints' (*CP*, p. 258). Despite such subtle divergences, comparison between conformist figures elucidates significant commonalities. Andrewes, Paul Welsby notes, 'contributed to the new school of theology which was providing the Church of England with some historical and theological basis. He emphasized the need for public worship and […] preached the divine right of kings'.[20] Conformists shared much Reformation theology with puritans; however, as Wallace points out, 'by certain subtle but in the long run important matters of tone and emphasis' they differed: differences include less insistence on preaching and predestination, emphasis on sacramental piety, greater reliance on patristic sources and attitude to ritual and tradition.[21] Within a Protestant framework a conformist current, which retained an attachment to an idea of the traditional Church with dignity and hierarchy, was affirming itself; in part perhaps because of the routinisation of charisma that tends follow the initial reforming enthusiasm, as Max Weber has theorised.[22]

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[18] Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1982), p. 76.

[19] 'The Litanie', John Donne, *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1929] 1979), pp. 308-18.

[20] Paul A. Welsby, *Lancelot Andrewes 1555-1626* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), p. 7.

[21] Wallace, p. 76.

[22] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Routledge: London, [1946] 1991), pp. 262-4.

According to Peter Lake this conformism, which would provide the basis for Laud's divisive policies in the later sixteen-thirties,[23] is the 'distinctly conformist and implicitly anti-Calvinist ideology developed by Hooker' and includes Andrewes.[24] Herbert has his place in this current.[25]

Aspects of Andrewes's conformism shed light on Herbert's work. Lake observes continuity between Richard Hooker's defence of royal prerogative in *adiaphora*, Andrewes and the Arminianism at the time of Laud:[26] Andrewes was a 'personal as well as an ideological link between the world of Hooker and the world of Laud'.[27] Andrewes's writings and actions were not always consistent. Nicholas Tyacke shows us an early Andrewes iconoclastic in his praise for bare churches, forbidding 'dancing and sporting' on Sunday and promoting 'credal' predestinarianism. Yet this does not mean that he started out as a puritan and later moved to avant-garde conformism, for 'Andrewes both criticised current Elizabethan practice [in the 1580s] and anticipated by fifty years the Caroline policy of the 1630s, when communion tables were to be placed in permanent altarwise position'.[28] Later, Andrewes enunciated strong anti-reformist views. He disliked sermons (discussed below in section ii) as they were typically

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[23] 'Overall, Andrewes, Hooker, and their allies clearly were the first representatives of a more distinctly Anglican theology that in the next generation of "Laudians" was to carry the criticism of the Reformed theology of grace much farther' (Wallace, p. 77).

[24] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, p. 240. For Herbert's Calvinist spirituality see Daniel W. Doerksen's *Picturing Religious Experience: George Herbert, Calvin, and the Scriptures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011). Hooker's conformism emerged from Elizabethan reformism, see Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: OUP, 2003). For an overview of scholarship on Hooker see Corneliu C. Simut, 'Pigeonholing Richard Hooker: A Selective Study of Relevant Secondary Sources', *Perichoresis* 3.1 (2005), 99-112.

[25] Achsah Guibbory's *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998), cited below, is persuasive on this point.

[26] Hooker's 'vision of the Christian community' includes 'a view of the visible church centred far more on the sacrament and on public worship than on preaching; a justification of the ceremonial arrangements of the English church that transcended the realm of *adiaphora* and instead attributed a positively religious role and significance to the rituals and observances of the church'; see Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity in the Court of James I' in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 113-33 (pp. 113-14).

[27] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 114.

[28] Nicholas Tyacke, 'Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier, eds., *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 5-33 (pp. 8-12 and 16).

practiced by puritans.[29] He thought that dwelling too much on predestination led to useless despair or fruitless speculation.[30] Herbert's Protestantism is also less harsh than that of many puritans when it comes to dealing with predestination. Faced with parishioners 'doubting' that 'God […] is theirs' – that is, doubting that they are chosen – 'The Country Parson' does not counsel the puritan emphasis on self-abjection (Calvin's humiliation or Perkins's mortification); instead, it focuses on 'the boundlesse Ocean of Gods Love': 'for no perfect Artist ever yet hated his owne works' (*CP*, p. 283). Perkins could not promise God's love to any but the elect: 'Gods loue is that, whereby God doth freely loue all such as are chosen in Christ Iesus'.[31] Puritan salvation-damnation charts were not appropriate for the Herbertian pastor. Inappropriate theological questioning is linked in conformist thought not only with puritan speculation but also with the subversive questioning of authority.[32] 'Jordan (I)' denounces the futile intelligence of elaborate poetry characterised as 'a winding stair' where 'all [is] veiled, while he that reads, divines, / Catching the sense at two removes' (ll. 3 & 9-10). The speaker commands: 'Nor let them punish me with loss of rime, / Who plainly say, *my God, My King*' (ll. 14-15). This conclusion (which, taking no chances, does rhyme) associates secular authority with divine authority in plain terms: for conformists, reverence toward Church authority was requisite.[33] *The Temple* assumes the necessity of gestures of reverence towards authority: kneeling is often mentioned, albeit in ways that avoid controversy.[34] 'The Country Parson' is more explicit: at Communion 'man's unpreparednesse asks kneeling. Hee that comes to the Sacrament, hath confidence of a Guest, and hee that kneels, confesseth himself an unworthy one, and therefore differs from other Feasters' (pp. 257-59). Although the *metaphorical* Communicant-speaker of 'Love (III)' is allowed to 'sit and eat' (l. 18), it behoves *real* Communicants to be humble and not to imitate the Apostles' sitting posture.

Andrewes sees God's gifts expressed through the visible church and its calendar, including Whitsun, the Church's baptismal day associated with the gift of the Holy

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[29] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 116-17 and Nicholas Tyacke, 'Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism', pp. 28-9.

[30] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 117.

[31] William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (London, 1623), p. 76.

[32] Andrewes associated such 'presumption against kings with the presumption that led to rationalist speculation about divine decree'. See Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 119.

[33] 'Buckeridge and Andrewes both compared reverence in the presence of God in church to reverence to the person of the prince, implying irreverence in one sphere would inevitably lead to irreverence in another'; see Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 119.

[34] The word 'kneel' occurs in 'Perirrhanterium', 'Sacrifice', 'Church-monuments', 'Businesse'.

Spirit.[35] *The Temple* is likewise preoccupied with Church calendar and rite in 'Whitsunday' and 'H. Baptisme (II)'.[36] Sacraments were central to conformist piety, linking together individual sin and purification emanating from Christ. As Lake notes, in sacramental rite 'Christ as the head of his mystical body, the church, was most immediately and efficaciously present to the members of that church. As such it represents the acme of Andrewes's and Buckeridge's general view of the visible church as a holy or sacred institution both containing and showing forth the saving presence of God to a sinful humanity'.[37] The place where such vital spiritual events occur requires reverence and a dignified aspect: 'this vision of the presence of God in his church [underlay conformists'] insistence on what might be called the beauty of holiness, a reverent, ceremonious and uniform public worship of God'.[38] Lake's description encompasses the mindset of the author of *The Temple*.

However, Herbert's conformism only goes so far in explaining his poetic-spiritual project. His vision of a healing Christ reflects a Johannine proclivity. For Paul Cefalu, Herbert's articulation of a divine Christ, his predominant identification of 'God with love' (involving realised eschatology) resonate more with elements from John's Gospel and John's First Epistle than with the Synoptics or Paul, whose 'forensic ransoming' became associated with inflexible predestination.[39] Johannine features are evinced in *The Temple*'s articulation of divine love; nonetheless they complement other New Testament elements, such as the 'synoptic' human Christ represented in 'The Sacrifice', that are also basic to Herbert's writing with its dense bible intertextuality.

Herbert's profound exploration of scripture and core Christian issues has led Herbert scholarship to uncover a range of doctrinal features in his work. That range attests to *The Temple*'s capacity to transcend dogmatic divide. Jeanne Clayton Hunter argues that he was drawn to aspects of puritan devotion, highlighting his 'closeness to Puritan piety through similar expressive practices, especially similar uses of images and metaphors to make known the intimate relationship between God and men in Christ'.[40] Herbert's homely imagery, his metaphors drawn from ordinary experience and his simple diction

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[35] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 121.

[36] See below, Part II. Also, Herbert's parson 'adviseth all to call to minde their Baptism often', *CP*, p. 258.

[37] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 128. Nicholas Tyacke also notes in Andrewes 'the superiority of holy communion over preaching'; see 'Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism', p. 14.

[38] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity', 128.

[39] Paul Cefalu, 'Herbert and the Johannine Renaissance', *ELH*, 1041-71 (pp. 1043 and 45).

[40] Jeanne Clayton Hunter, 'George Herbert and Puritan Piety', *The Journal of Religion*, 2.68 (1988), 226-41 (p. 229).

bespeak puritan ideals of simplicity in worship and pastoral language; ideals that might set *The Temple* on opposite poles to the lavishness of the Counter-Reformation baroque. Herbert also emphasises self-reformation as did many puritans.

But one can overstretch the apparently puritan aspects of Herbert's work. A homely aesthetic need not evince reformism. Nor did puritans have a monopoly on personal spirituality. Herbert took an interest in the devotional writings of Catholics like Juan de Valdés and Luigi Cornaro, who showed irenic conformists that one did not need to be a puritan to be pious.[41] Moreover, Herbert's venture into religious poetry owes much to the Catholic martyr, Robert Southwell, as Gary M. Bouchard has demonstrated in an article highlighting verbal and thematic parallels between Herbert and Southwell.[42] That is not to say that Herbert followed Southwell's doctrine in following his poetic example, but it does suggest a surprising degree of sympathy with a person who was an anathema to many Protestants and associated with the treasonous Catholic cause. Herbert was clearly open to different features of Christian piety, whatever their origin.

Regarding Herbert's doctrine one should avoid oversimplification. Daniel Doerksen eloquently urges to think of:

> the branches of Christianity as spokes on a wheel. They have least in common at the periphery, and most at the hub […] Herbert and his church recognize serious differences with Rome about basic doctrine, but insofar as they are Christian and have a biblical heritage they have many essentials in common. By dwelling on the spiritual relationship of God and man and on the depiction of inner spiritual conflicts, even with what one may call a Protestant approach, Herbert deals with what is of great importance to Catholics as well.[43]

Immersed in the rich 'hub' of Christianity, Herbert's spiritual explorations encompass Catholic concerns without him being Catholic. In the same reconciliatory spirit as Doerksen, Andrew Harnack's calls for an approach to Herbert's doctrine 'that

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[41] See Hutchinson (pp. 292-320) and Joyce Ransome, 'George Herbert, Nicholas Ferrar, and the "Pious Works" of Little Gidding', *GHJ*, 31 (2007/2008), 1-19 (p. 5).

[42] Gary M. Bouchard, 'The Roman Steps to the Temple: An Examination of the Influence of Robert Southwell, SJ, upon George Herbert', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 3.10 (2007), 131-150.

[43] Daniel W. Doerksen, 'Things Fundamental or Indifferent: Adiaphorism and Herbert's Church Attitudes', *GHJ*, 1.11 (1987), 15-22 (p. 20).

acknowledges the insights of both protestant and catholic readings'.[44] Readings that highlight Herbert's inspiration from a broad Christian culture have much to contribute, but they should not obscure Herbert's conformism. While opposing branches of Christianity cohere in *The Temple*, one must not neglect the 'spokes' that Herbert rejected and how he rejected them.

Given Herbert's conformism and his doctrinal openness, I use the term 'consensual conformism', in opposition to Laud's divisive conformism. Herbert and Laud sprang from the same ideological soil but Herbert is not to be confused with Laud. Graham Parry aptly argues that Herbert 'is probably best understood as the poetic exponent of the churchmanship of Lancelot Andrewes, for the values he expresses and the austere restraint that accompanies his pleasure in the service of the church are more characteristic of that earlier phase of the beauty of holiness that emerged in Jacobean times'.[45] Parry's observations about visual holiness consolidate the parallels between Herbert and Andrewes discussed above while pointing to a distinction between a pre-Laudian, restrained promotion of sacred space and ceremony and Caroline/Laudian ecclesiology. Underlying that distinction is a thread leading back to the reign of Elizabeth. Peter White points out that the Laudian program of altar construction after 1635 was 'part of a much wider movement of emphasis on visual and sacramental aspects of Prayer book worship which had its origins deep in Elizabeth's reign'.[46] This long-term emphasis on hallowedness in the church informs Herbert's use of the theme of architecture in *The Temple*.[47] Indeed, Herbert's literary celebration of 'The Altar' loosely foreshadows Laudian reform. But Herbert died too early to be called a 'Laudian'.[48] If Herbert's work contributed to Laud's intensification of conformism – which took on, as Darren Oldridge says, an 'unprecedented vigour' in the regulation of preaching and uniformity in the latter part of the 1630s – Herbert himself was not intentionally implicated.[49]

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[44] Andrew Harnack, 'Both Protestant and Catholic: George Herbert and "To All Angels and Saints"', *GHJ*, 11 (1987) 23-40 (p. 24).

[45] Graham Parry, *The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation: Glory, Laud and Honour* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 132.

[46] Peter White, 'The *Via Media* in the Early Stuart Church', in *The Early Stuart Church*, ed. by Kenneth Fincham (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 211-30 (p. 228); White sees the outbreak of European war in 1618 as key to English radicalisation.

[47] Darren Oldridge argues that '[t]o the Laudian [*sic*] poet George Herbert and his imitators in the 1630s, the "English Church" was pre-eminently a physical institution, whose spiritual qualities were naturally represented in architectural language'; see *Religious and Society in Early Stuart England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 5.

[48] Herbert died in the same year that Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury.

[49] Oldridge, p. 38.

ii. Herbert's Muted Defence of Modest Church Decoration

'The British Church' promotes a conciliatory beauty 'Neither too mean, nor yet too gay' (l. 8). This aesthetic *via media* in church reflects the aesthetics of *The Temple* which often combines surface simplicity with ornate, semantic complexity. 'The Country Parson' also favours a conciliatory 'middle way between superstition, and slovenlinesse' in the appearance of 'The Parson's Church'.[50] But the middle way of Herbert's pastoral book includes, as Doerksen observes, a conformist appeal for 'reverence in saying the prayers of the liturgy', 'decency and order in the church building and furniture' and 'holiness, reverence, and the significance of baptism and Holy Communion'.[51] Both 'The Parson's Church' and 'The British Church' echo Hooker's arguments against puritans who seek a plain or austere aspect to the church. Hooker makes the point that puritans complain more about ornament in the displays of sacred power than in secular power: 'To solemn actions of royalty and justice their suitable ornaments are a beauty. Are they only in religion a stain?'[52] If ornament dignifies a court, why shouldn't it do the same for a church? Puritans might have replied that a court is not a church and the latter should not be a hotbed of the vices that moralists suspected were rife at court. But conformists like Hooker and Herbert tended to overlook unfortunate human failings in the interests of maintaining order in secular and sacred society alike. On the 'stains' of fallen man, in 'De labe maculísque' Herbert's speaker rhetorically asks whether 'It is so / Strange' for the Church of England to have 'Imperfections, stains'; indeed, 'Christ's blood' is given to the Church which administers it for the purpose of 'wash[ing those] stains off' (ll. 2-7).[53] Herbert sees in human weakness a justification for Church authority and rite not a reason for Church reform. *The Temple*'s poetic celebration of the Church of England complements Hooker's theoretical discourse in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Both works insist on the legitimacy of the established English Church and associate the authority of the Church with the dignity of the physical church.

Herbert's consensually mean 'The British Church' recalls John Donne's 'Holy Sonnet' XVIII, whose speaker demands to be shown the true Church. Donne delights in the sexual implications of the topos of Church as bride of Christ, whose nakedness

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[50] *CP*, p. 246; 'The Parson's Church' is the chapter title.

[51] Doerksen, , p. 43.

[52] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol 2, Book 5. Ch. 29, p. 86.

[53] George Herbert, *The Latin Poetry of George Herbert: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. by Mark McCloskey and Paul R. Murphy (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1965), p. 30-1.

(authenticity) he desires to behold because he is not sure what kind of a woman/Church the bride is. Is she 'richly painted?' or is she 'rob'd and tore / Lament[ing] and mourn[ing] in Germany and here?'[54] This sonnet's aspiration to see the true Church bears traces of the ecclesiastical scepticism Donne expressed in 'Satyre III'. Herbert, by contrast, both veers away from erotic figuration and avoids such doubt. Instead of questioning which ecclesiastical option is best, the more assured speaker of 'The British Church' affirms that foreign Churches 'either painted are, / Or else undrest' (ll. 11-12). The Roman bride is 'wantonly' tarted up to allure, while the wild lady representing Calvin's Geneva is too zealous to brush her hair, which lies 'About her eares' – her appearance is immodest in an opposing manner: she 'nothing wears' (ll. 13-24). In contrast to these two extremes of (patriarchically conceived) feminine vice, the 'dearest Mother' of the national Church keeps a respectable and reasonable 'mean' (l. 26).

The historical significance of Herbert's poem is underscored by Anthony Milton who argues that the English Church carved out a distinctive Protestant identity different from other Protestant churches. The poem is thus a fanfare of a nationally specificity: 'it was left to George Herbert to proclaim the new Anglo-centric orthodoxy, and the death of the Protestant Cause, as he addressed his "dear mother" the Church of England in simple but decisive terms'.[55] Milton quotes the poem's rousing conclusion:

> Blessed be God, whose love it was
> To double-moat thee with his grace,
> And none but thee
> (ll. 28-30).

However, insular Protestantism had its own faultiness. These words eulogise a Church that does not exist since there was no *British* Church. Scotland had its own Church despite the union of the Crowns (1603) and early Stuart attempts at cross-border ecclesiastical unity. The poem's proclamation is in part an aspiration for an imaginary institutional unity. The presumption that there was such a thing as the Church of 'Great Britain' (or confounding aspiration and reality) was common in conformist discourse.[56] For all Herbert's affirmation of sensible Aristotelian means or native middle ways he is surreptitiously engaging in anti-Presbyterian controversy.

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[54] John Donne, *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 301.

[55] Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 528

[56] 'English conformists spoke of the Church of "Great Britain", a phrase that erased the Kirk's claim to national distinction'; see Prior, p. 205.

Herbert's ideal Church would not give sermons the central place that they had for puritans. Calvin defends prophesying in the following terms: 'the Spirit is quenched the moment prophesying fall[s] into contempt'.[57] Like his puritan followers, Calvin sees in preaching an occasion to ignite the Holy Spirit in Christians. At the outset of *The Temple*, 'Perirrhanterium' signals sermons' possible shortcomings: 'A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies / And turn delight into a sacrifice' (ll. 5-6). The book hopes to provide its own spiritual edification to those not stirred by sermons. Later in the poem sermon-gadding puritan views are targeted in a warning that sermons are of less importance than private prayers: 'Resort to sermons, but to prayers most: / Praying's the end of preaching' (ll. 409-10). Herbert's words echo Andrewes, who, as Lake observes, preached that 'public prayer was the end for which preaching was the means'; Andrewes puts it thus: 'the calling on us by prophesying is but that we should call on the name of the lord. All prophesying, all preaching is but to this end'.[58] Herbert and Andrewes (both preachers) do not denigrate preaching; but they disagree with puritans for whom this vital ritual activity is an end in itself. Andrewes harshly denounces puritan services with 'sermon hypocrites [leading to preachers'] volubility of utterance, earnestness of action, straining the voice in passionate delivery'.[59] Showy religious emotionalism was repugnant to Andrewes. Herbert's writing does not stretch to such vitriol, although Herbert does express distaste for 'Enthusiasmes' in his comments on Juan de Valdés, *Considerations* (p. 310).[60] On the other hand, 'The Country Parson' disapproves Andrewes's manner of taking scripture apart, as we shall see shortly.

Fixation on sermons is obliquely critiqued in 'The Windows':

> speech alone
> Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
> And in the ear, not conscience ring
> (ll. 13-15).

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[57] John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), trans. by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), I.9.3.

[58] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity in the Court of James I', 126; where Andrewes's quote can be found. For Andrewes's views on preaching, see Lancelot Andrewes, *Selected Sermons and Lectures*, ed. by Peter McCullough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xvi.

[59] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity in the Court of James I', 116.

[60] I deal with this comment in detail in *Distance and Dealings between the Christian and God in the Poetry of George Herbert*, Chapter I, Part II.

Again, there is nothing wrong with sermons *per se*; Herbert worries that the speech of sermons 'alone' is insufficiently edifying to penetrate the listener. How the poem arrives at this conclusion requires close attention to the preceding lines:

> Lord, how can man preach thy eternall word?
> He is a brittle crazie glasse:
> Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
> This glorious and transcendent place,
> To be a window, through thy grace.
>
> But when thou dost anneal in glasse thy storie,
> Making thy life to shine within
> The holy Preachers; then the light and glorie
> More rev'rend grows, & more doth win:
> Which else shows watrish, bleak, & thin.
>
> Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
> When they combine and mingle, bring
> A strong regard and aw:
> (ll. 1-13).

How, the poem asks, can the preacher host the majesty of God and find divine inspiration to preach? Judy Kronenfeld correctly notes that the 'brittle crazie glass' refers to the human frailty of the preacher, who is 'inherently flawed and weak'; however, her interpretation of 'place' as *position*,[61] meaning the 'the condition of being a minister of the gospel, mortal preacher of the eternal word', is problematic.[62] Reading 'This glorious and transcendent place' merely as, say, 'the glorious and transcendent condition of being a preacher' implies a curious exaltation of the office of priesthood. There is no reason to exclude the more obvious interpretation of 'place' as *place*. The word with this primary meaning occurs frequently in *The Temple*,[63] Kronenfeld's appeal to the concordance notwithstanding. Where 'place' means position it usually has the connotation of rank rather than office. In sum, the 'transcendent place' refers back to the *place* of 'thy [God's] temple' of the previous line.

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[61] The reading is taken up in Helen Wilcox's gloss: 'Position, status'; see *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), p. 247; Hereafter referred to as 'Wilcox'.

[62] Judy Z. Kronenfeld, 'Probing the Relation between Poetry and Ideology: Herbert's "The Windows"', *John Donne Journal*, 1.2 (1983), 55-80, (pp. 66 and 67). Kronenfeld correctly sees an allusion to 1 *Corinthians* 13:12, although the poem does not explicate Paul's 'now'/'then' eschatological point.

[63] 'Perirrhanterium', l. 47 & 327, 'Sacrifice', l. 183, p. 32 & *passim*.

The poem goes on to say that there is a way for light and 'glorie' to grow 'More rev'rend' – a word implying respect for authority with its conformist connotations. This increased holiness occurs through the addition of coloured stained glass: when God 'anneal[s] in glasse thy storie'. The story refers to biblical scenes which are probably of the Passion, Christ's story – Kronenfeld rightly acknowledges that this glass 'may contain the image of Christ'.[64] W.H. Auden's understanding of the poem leads him to state that 'on occasions, a stained-glass window could be of more spiritual help than a sermon'.[65] This is misleading since sermons and glass do not stand in opposition. Yet Auden is right inasmuch as the poem is making an implicit ornamentalist case and not simply saying in a circuitous manner that it is good for preachers to be inspired when they preach. Auden's view is criticised by Sheridan Blau and Kronenfeld, who see the reference to stained glass as only metaphorical and not celebrating that architectural feature.[66] Kronenfeld focuses on the interior spirituality of the preacher, but the poem associates the holy interiority of a person with the holy interiority of glass ('in glasse'), where 'thy [God's] storie' inheres. Kronenfeld correctly highlights the priest's emotional 'internalization' and the 'pathos of coloration', but she is overly trenchant in her dismissal of '*any supposed* Anglican emphasis on the need for visible signs or images to stir devotion, or to a celebration of the way such images work in actuality, or to a justification of their appropriateness' (emphasis mine).[67] In a dexterous paradox that heightens the sense of mystery, the stanza concludes that God's metaphorical light shines brighter through stained glass ('more doth win') than through clear glass.

Pursuing the motif of mystery, the final stanza evokes the mysterious union of 'Doctrine and life, colours and light': spiritual force comes through the productive combination ('combine and mingle') of all elements including stained glass and sermons, as opposed the exclusion of any element. This inclusive poem is not setting up an *either speech or decoration* alternative; it favours conformist *speech with ornament* as opposed to the reformist *speech without ornament*. Stained glass is both a metaphor for this mystery and a means of spiritual edification; particularly since it elicits 'A strong regard and aw' (ll. 11-13). As with the use of the word 'rev'rend', this line evokes the conformist association of institutional authority and sacredness. Herbert's figuring of annealing as the union of 'Doctrine and life, colours and light' combines Church authority, decoration and the mystical: 'Doctrine' signifies the Church's teaching; 'life' refers to

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[64] Kronenfeld, p. 70.

[65] *The Complete Works of W. H. Auden: Prose, Volume VI, 1969-1973*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 565.

[66] Sheridan D. Blau, 'Herbert's Homiletic Theory', *GHJ*, 1 (1978), 17-29.

[67] Kronenfeld, p. 74.

spiritual participation; church windows contain 'colours'; and light, associated with God's 'grace' (l. 5), denotes the preacher's and the parishioners' experience of the divine in church. Nonetheless, by expressing his ornamentalism through complex figuration, Herbert blunts its ideological force. Church decoration was requisite but should not be abused. The 'painting' in Herbert's 'Parson's Church' must 'be grave, and reverend, not with light colours, or foolish anticks' (*CP*, p. 246). Beauty is not to be idolatrously revered for its own (rather than God's) sake.[68] And yet, the poem's imprecision about metaphorical stained glass makes it subtly memorable, particularly as the architectural feature is flagged in the title.

Herbert gained experience at public speaking in his function as orator at Cambridge and had practical experience of delivering sermons which contributed to his reflections on the subject in 'The Parson preaching' (*CP*). Herbert's parson preaches in a world both different from a puritan's prophesying to like-minded people awaiting inspiration and different from Andrewes among a highly educated court. At court Andrewes could happily go about 'crumbling the text into small [grammatical] parts', but the parson cannot (p. 235). Herbert cautions against this style, which 'hath neither in it sweetness, nor gravity, not variety', because it tends to denaturalise scripture, whose words are reduced items of 'a dictionary' (p. 235). The chapter echoes the concern for the preacher's inspiration in 'The Windows': 'the character of [the parson's] Sermon is Holiness; he is not witty, or learned, or eloquent, but Holy' (p. 233). The country parson should sustain a mood of sanctity and avoid clarification of controversy. Reverential seriousness is recommended for an audience of 'Country people; which are thick, and heavy, and hard to raise to a poynt of Zeal, and fervency' and do not respond to exhortations, which 'often dy with the Sermon' (p. 233). The parson's parishioners, whom Herbert does not hold in high esteem, need to be frightened: 'He often tels them, that Sermons are dangerous things, that none goes out of the Church as he came in, but either better, or worse; that none is careless before his Judg, and that the word of God shal judge us' (p. 233). 'Dangerous' here need not be seen as 'a veiled acknowledgment of the political danger involved in embracing' 'a "Puritan" faith in the redemptive power of preaching', as Ronald Cooley suggests, since the danger pertains to the soul of the negligent listener whom the parson oversees and tries to impress gravity upon.[69] Preaching had spiritual power if one took it seriously, whether puritan or not, but that power depended on the auditors' mental availability. To favour appropriate reception, the preacher had to choose 'ravishing' biblical texts and prepare by 'seasoning all our

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[68] Religious 'Images', unlike scripture, are 'Elementary' and not 'a use of perfection' (p. 309).

[69] Ronald W. Cooley, *'Full of Knowledg': George Herbert and Early Modern Social Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 51.

words and sentences in our hearts […] and cordially expressing all that we say; so that the auditors may plainly perceive that every world is hart-deep' (p. 233). Herbert recommends both histrionics – 'making many Apostrophies to God, as Oh my Master' – and surveillance combined with manipulative oratorical devices to reach audiences: 'he observes who marks, and who not; and with particularizing of his speech now to the younger sort, then to the elder, now to the poor, and now to the rich. This is for you, and This for you; for particulars ever touch, and awake more then generalls' (p. 233). More than questions of dogma and style, Herbert's thoughts on preaching focus on the practical issues of providing a religious service in a community where a solitary preacher represents a distant authority – both sacred and secular.[70] In this hierarchical assembly (*ekklesia*), the parson must balance indulgence with reprimand or punishment[71] in a place where he may not always be trusted, may feel misunderstood and may not be as awe-inspiring as he would like to be.[72]

Because people are not easy to move spiritually, religious ornamentation has an important role. Richard E. Hughes points out that 'Church music and church furniture and the decency of Anglican ritual were venerated by Herbert'.[73] However, the obliqueness of the ornamentalism of 'The Windows' cautions against the idea that Herbert promoted church embellishment unreservedly.[74] 'The H. Communion' sheds light on his reservations about the association of ornate beauty with the sacred:

> Not in rich furniture, or fine aray,
> Nor in a wedge of gold,
> Thou, who for me wast sold
> (ll. 1-3).

Lavish decoration in church cannot buy access to the divine; after all, Jesus commands, 'make not my Father's house a house of merchandise' (John, 3.16). Herbert does not

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[70] *CP* speaks of 'duties […] from the State, or from God', p. 235.

[71] See *CP*, chapters 23 and 28.

[72] For suggestions, misunderstanding and potential mistrust see *CP*, chapters 3, 9, 11; palliated, no doubt, (inter alia) by the parson's participation in rural festivities (ch. 35).

[73] Richard E. Hughes, 'George Herbert and the Incarnation', in *Essential Articles for the Study of George Herbert's Poetry*, ed. by John R. Roberts (Hamden: Archon Books, 1979), pp. 52-62 (p. 54).

[74] Izaak Walton recounts how Herbert paid to have the church repaired and the chapel beautified, *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert & Robert Sanderson*, ed. by George Saintsbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1670] 1947), pp. 292-3.

favour religious ornament that is frivolous or venal. His church should have a dignified aspect, not distractingly sumptuous décor.[75]

Conformists looked to the precedent of the early Church to justify their ornamentalism. Richard Hooker claims that the primitive Church's lack of ornament was a matter of constraint: 'their want of external ornaments, which when they wanted, the cause was their only lack of ability; ability serving, they wanted them not'.[76] For Hooker the early Church was not undecorated on principle but out of necessity. Hooker responds to the kind of argument advanced by Calvin: the 'first admission [of 'visible representations'] as an ornament to churches took place after the purity of the ministry had somewhat degenerated'.[77] Calvin equates church ornament with decadence. For Hooker, by contrast, a church should be decorated when the institution is blessed with the means to do so. In this debate Herbert is closer to Hooker than to Calvin.

iii. Limits of Herbert's Consensual Conformism

We have seen Herbert expressing conformist positions in a non-polemical manner, but he sometimes breaks out of that restraint when dealing with those whom he sees as the Church's disruptive critics. The speaker of 'Conscience' begins boldly by addressing one such critic in the imperative: 'Peace pratler, do not lowre' (l. 1). The poem's title announces a private theme and can be read as pastoral advice against self-recrimination; but the private motif frames public concerns, as Sidney Gottlieb highlights.[78] The poem's caginess about entering the ideological fray is evidenced in its reluctance to identify clearly the 'pratler'.[79] That the word 'prattle' was a relatively recent borrowing from the Dutch word 'praten' (talk, chatter) establishes an association with a centre of Calvinism. The word 'lowre', meaning 'To frown, scowl; to look angry or sullen' (*OED*) hints that the 'pratler' refers to puritans as they were popularly conceived of; namely, as Malvolio-type figures. Puritans not only had a reputation for being sullen and scowling at what they disapproved of, they were also very vocal (hence prattling) and, from their adversaries' perspective, they 'scratch[ed]' and 'carp[ed]' (l. 18) from a self-proclaimed moral high ground. Their enduring reputation as killjoys comes across

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[75] In 'Sion' Herbert expresses similar reservations about the merely external 'pomp' of Solomon's temple, which is of less worth than 'one good grone' (ll. 7 & 18).

[76] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol 2, Book 5, Ch. 15, p. 50.

[77] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.11.13.

[78] Gottlieb is discussed below in Part III. For other scholarly views on the poem see Wilcox, pp. 378-79.

[79] A similar reluctance can be found in 'The Famile', described by Gary Kuchar as 'Herbert's obliquely anti-puritan poem'; see 'Introduction: Distraction and the Ethics of Poetic Form in The Temple', p. 17.

in the following lines: 'Not a fair look, but thou dost call it foul / Not a sweet dish, but thou dost call it sowre' (ll. 2-3). Specifically, it is the Church's Eucharist 'sweet dish' that they are accused of finding sour and church's 'fair look' they find foul. This latter association is reinforced by puritans' dislike of (popish) 'Musick' which to them seems to 'howl' rather than edify.

The speaker claims to have lost his eyes and ears 'By listning to' the prattler's 'chatting fears' (l. 5) and demands, 'Pratler, no more, I say: / My thoughts must work, but like a noiselesse sphere' (ll. 7-8). His thoughts must be as harmonious as a perfect 'sphere' of the cosmos. The prattler is excluded from this 'Harmonious peace' and purged (i.e. bled out) from the body ecclesiastic by the 'physic' of 'My saviours blood' (ll. 9-14): holy blood bleeds out bad blood. The puritan is flushed away by the sacred eucharistic drink he objects to. The poem's boasted 'peace' (with its inappropriate irenic connotations) is won at the price of its fictional blood which is not only eucharistic but also violent. The closing couplet's belligerence is all the more notable for the relative lack of such language in *The Temple*:

> The bloody cross of my dear Lord
> Is both my physic and my sword
> (ll. 23-4).

Christ's authority and the speaker's violence, bound by commanding rhymes Lord/sword, come to bear decisively upon the prattler. Here Herbert's verse breaks out of its understatement and dons crusading rhetoric: the speaker wields the Christic symbol of the cross which has become sharpened into a sword. The attack is aimed at those who objected to that symbol, particularly during baptism. Herbert's parson 'willingly and cheerfully crosseth the child' during that rite (*CP*, p. 258).

Esher Gilman Richey argues that 'Herbert adopts an inclusive, conformist stance which seeks to heal the widening breaches in the English Church'. That is true; but poems like 'Conscience' show that Herbert's ideological mediation has its limits. Richey cites one instance in which, for her, a polemical conformist stricture is enunciated and subsequently contained. 'Perirrhanterium' privileges 'publick' prayer over 'private prayer'; thus insisting on the priority of corporate devotion, which 'hath more promise, more love' (ll. 397-8). For Richey, 'Initially, [Herbert] appears to be following the Laudians in defining the church rather than the home or conventicle as a sacred space'. The conformist thrust is clear; however, I would differ from Richey's reading of the following lines as reconciliatory:

> We all are but cold suitours; let us move
> Where it is warmest. Leave thy six and seven;
> Pray with the most; for where most pray, is heaven
> (ll. 400-2).

According to Richey, 'Herbert refuses to describe the private meeting of "six and seven" as a hidden and potentially subversive activity as some Laudians were doing'.[80] To be sure, Herbert does not use violent rhetoric to denounce these small religious gatherings known as conventicles. Nonetheless, the poem indicates that the church is the warmer meeting space and unequivocally orders conventiclers to 'Leave' their private gatherings. The phrase 'six and seven', according to Tobin, came 'originally from dicing', it refers to the 'indifference to the consequence of your action'.[81] Herbert is implicitly accusing conventiclers of dicing with their own souls and, worse, gambling with the unity of the 'publick' Church.

Herbert's conformist sympathies are clear. Yet things might have been different if he had lived to see the damage that Laudianism was to cause to Church unity. Herbert's essential criticism of the radical 'Left' is that they are responsible for discord – he might have made the same criticism of the radical 'Right' in the late 30s. Herbert shares in the concerns about ecclesiastical discord expressed by Francis Bacon, who warns against Church disunity promoting the cause of 'atheists and profane persons' who 'hear so many discordant and contrary opinions in religion'.[82] The insult 'atheists' is rhetorical; meaning 'godless' rather than a philosophical position. Bacon is not worried about disbelief, he is worried about social discord which he associated with Christian controversies. Herbert's 'Church-Rents and Schismes', which voices similar anxieties, expresses, in Achsah Guibbory's insightful words, 'the deeply conflicted *via media* of the seventeenth-century English church, a *via media* that would not fully survive either the Revolution or the Restoration'.[83] Indeed, 'Church-Rents and Schismes' reflects, at the point where Herbert's consensualism reaches its limits, not only the strong ecclesiastical opinions of Herbert's day but also the seeds of the violent conflict that would explode in the mid-century. The first stanza opens with a metaphorical discourse about the 'Brave rose' sitting on a 'chair' representing the Church which is subjected to

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[80] Esher Gilman Richey, 'The Political Design of Herbert's Temple', *The English Renaissance*, 1.37 (1997), 73-96 (pp. 80-2). More convincingly: Herbert 'seeks to correct particular seventeenth-century errors by asserting a conformist position on a number of hotly contested ecclesiastical points' (p. 81).

[81] George Herbert, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. by John Tobin (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 'Notes', p. 330; hereafter 'Tobin'.

[82] Francis Bacon, 'Of Unity in Religion', *The Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 68.

[83] Guibbory, p. 45.

the destructive attack of a worm (l. 1). The worm eats the rosebush's roots and branches, after which the wind (profiting from the worm's work) blows down leaves. This canker incarnates 'debates and fretting jealousies [which] / Did worm and work within you' (ll. 16-17); the worm represents zealotry and divisive debates which detract from the rose's ornamental beauty. The fact that it gnaws 'within' the Church recalls Herbert's worry about internal dissent. The third stanza refers to the Church's 'neighbours' which are 'like a north-winde […that] cast[s]' the Church's parts 'in the dirt / Where Pagans tread' (ll. 22-4). Herbert is targeting those people north of the border who did not wish to add to the union of the Crown the union of the (Episcopalian) Church. Worse, the ominous Presbyterian 'north-wind' threatens to whip up would-be imitators within the Church of England.

Although the poem gives some clues as to the interpretation of the allegory of stanza one, it remains obscure in the details. Is the rose the institution and the chair Canterbury?[84] Is it the pure Church Militant while the chair is its fallible human institutional foundation? Ideologically speaking, what kind of Church is the rose? The obvious answer is the Church of England to which Herbert belonged. But the dig at Scottish Presbyterians might make it the 'British Church' – more an ecclesiastical aspiration than an institutional reality. In a reversal of typical accusations of Papal corruption, rot in the Church is not due to popish paganism but to the 'Pagans' of the 'north' – here Herbert seems to be xenophobically associating his contemporary Scots with their 'barbaric' forebears who fought off the Romans despite their primitive means: they were closer to 'dirt' (l. 23) than to 'civilisation'.

'Church-Rents and Schismes' may blame the outsider for breaking up the Church but its defence of the established Church was no less divisive than the target of its blame, for it targets conforming Church members who questioned the role of Bishops in the Church. The poem articulates a committed lamentation of the 'beauteous glories' of the sacred church which 'rude unhallow'd steps do crush and grinde' (ll. 8-9). Herbert's conformist defence of the Church might appear too Catholic to the taste of some Protestants. His use of the word 'chair', standing emphatically at the end of line one (and in line ten), recalls the Latin word 'cathedra', associated with Church hierarchy: a cathedral was a bishop's 'chair'. The word suggests moral authority issuing *ex cathedra* in a way that would also sound dangerously popish to attentive reformists – particularly if, as has been suggested, the 'chair' refers to Rome.[85] If Laudians found in Herbert their

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[84] Wilcox, p. 489.

[85] Dianne Young, 'The Orator's Church and the Poet's Temple', *GHJ*, 12 (1989), 1-15 (p. 10). Given Herbert's anti-popery, this claim is unlikely; but it shows how the poem could be read at the time.

prophet after his death, it has to be admitted that Herbert left them material to work with.

Part II. Hierotopia and the Celebration of Church Rite and Calendar

The ideological tensions discussed above form the backdrop of Herbert's vision of divine proximity inside the church. The idea of sacred space was complicated by the unstable ideas about space in the period.[86] Reformists did not see church space as ontologically distinct from any other space. In this regard they reflect the demystified space laid bare by the worldly orientation of Renaissance learning. Increasing knowledge of the finite material world contributed to the demystification of space. In contrast to the traditional, more comforting, man-centred Ptolemaic vision of the cosmos, conceptual space had been extended infinitely by Nicolas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno,[87] who argued that the universe was boundless. The idea of an infinite material universe was frightening to some individuals who dwelled on the implications, such as Blaise Pascal who wrote, 'the eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me'.[88] Herbert may have felt something similar since, as Hutchinson comments 'Herbert often shows a fear of unlimited space and loves shelter of an enclosure' (p. 494). Thus, the speaker of 'The Temper (I)' hopes to nestle under a roof and avoid the vast spaces of 'fourtie heav'ns, or more', which he longs (spiritually) to 'peere above' and beyond towards God (ll. 5-6). Herbert lived amid shifting ideas about what material space was and what the place of God and man might be in it. In this unstable context Herbert brings God into the imaginary space of *The Temple* where the material and the immaterial co-habit in a conformist spirit: in church space God can meet arms with man.

Yet Herbert had to build his literary 'Church' on the ruins of Reformation iconoclasm. Henri Lefebvre sets out the problem: 'How have conquerors or revolutionaries over the ages gone about destroying a society? They destroy their monuments'.[89] Protestant iconoclasm was an attempt to remodel Christian society through destruction of

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[86] See Graham Parry, *The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation* and 'Sacred Space in Laudian England', in *Sacred Text – Sacred Space: Architectural, Spiritual and Literary Conveniences in England and Wales*, ed. by Joseph Sterrett and Peter Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 123-40.

[87] Charles H. Lohr, 'Metaphysics', p. 552 and Alfonso Ingenio, 'The New Philosophy of Nature', p. 254, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 537-638 & 236-63.

[88] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p. 161; translation mine.

[89] Henri Lefebvre, *La Produciton de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 2000), p. 254; translation mine.

monuments that attempted to penetrate beyond worldly space. Pre-Reformation liturgy routinely brought together space, gesture and the sacred in ways that involve body language, liturgical gestures, and the consecration of space.[90] In the Old Religion raising the host linked the priesthood and the laity, man and the divine, finite, earthly space and infinite spaces that belong to God. One of the medieval Church's functions was to provide a symbolic and emotional link between the human finite and the divine infinite for the Christian community. The Church's ability to fulfil such a role had become undermined in Herbert's day by the Reformation.

Richard Williams has shown that Catholics in post-Reformation England struggled to maintain sacred spaces for their increasingly ostracised religious practice: what they saw as an 'essential holiness' of consecrated objects could 'help transform mundane spaces into sacred spaces'. Catholics were fighting to preserve enchanted space in the face of 'the Protestant government's calculated attack on the very notion of sacred space'.[91] The Catholic idea of a space invested with hallowedness was an anathema to reformists, but not to conformists. Laud radicalised that conformist tradition to an extent that antagonised many.[92] Nonetheless, Laud's concern for sacred space partook of 'a widespread desire', discussed by Andrew Spicer, 'to distinguish between the sacred and the profane amongst the second-generation Reformers'.[93] Herbert participates in that concern in his poetic promotion of sacred space. In the face of Protestant desacralisation of space, Herbert concedes that although the world is lost to sin, Christians ought to turn to the sanctuary in which man can access the transcendent on earth: the church. Herbert's poetry portrays the church as a hallowed space, or a hierotopia, in which the Christian might expect God's presence is in His 'glorious and transcendent place'.

Heinrich Plett shows how *The Temple*'s depiction of the church involves a rhetorical device called 'topothesia', which the early modern rhetorician Henry Peacham describes as 'a fair description of a place […] when the orator describeth a place, and yet no such place: As is the house of envy, in the 6. booke of Metamorphosis'.[94] In this procedure

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[90] Ibid., p. 248.

[91] Richard L. Williams, 'Forbidden Spaces in Reformation England', in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 95-113 (pp. 104 and 113).

[92] See Peter Lake, 'The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s', in Kenneth Fincham, *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, p. 165.

[93] Andrew Spicer, '"God Will Have a House": Defining Sacred Space and Rites of Consecration in Early Seventeenth-Century England' in *Defining the* Holy, ed. by Spicer and Hamilton, pp. 207-230 (p. 213).

[94] Henry Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, in Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), p. 219. Helen Wilcox shows how in the period '[t]o read a book was, symbolically, to enter it, discern its textual architecture and enjoy its created space'; see 'Early Modern

the physical features of a place are imaginatively elaborated. Plett argues that in Herbert's topothesia '[t]he *loca particulara*' – that is, specified places, such as 'The Church-Porch', 'Church Monuments' etc. – 'do not form a locally or logically coherent sense but are intermingled with titles of a dogmatic or psychological kind'.[95] In fact *The Temple* begins with a coherent topothesia which is not sustained. It is as though Herbert lost interest in pushing it too far as he progressed, finding, perhaps, that his preference lay with spiritual lyrics. Topothesia at the beginning of *The Temple* has the didactic intention of converting the act of reading into the architectural experience of entering a sacred precinct. The reader enters via the first section entitled 'The Church-Porch' in which he or she receives lengthy instruction that takes the form of the morally purifying poem 'Perirrhanterium', which, as Tobin points out, refers to 'an instrument for sprinkling holy water'.[96] The poem encourages the reader to imagine being sprinkled by the purifying holy water of its moral advice. What Stephanie Yearwood writes of *The Temple* as a whole is especially the case for 'Perirrhanterium': 'the primary intent is rhetorical. It was conceived as an instrument or treatment to be applied to the lives of sinners'.[97] *The Temple*'s language to cure sinners begins with 'Perirrhanterium' which purifies the reader. The point is reinforced in the concluding poem of 'The Church-Porch', 'Superliminaire', which addresses the reader thus:

> Thou, whom former precepts have
> Sprinkled and taught, how to behave
> Thy self in church
>   (ll. 1-3).

The word 'church' looks forward to the following section, 'The Church', while 'precepts' recalls the series of precepts in 'Perirrhanterium'. The word 'former' can refer to the previous poem or the precepts learned from childhood onwards. The text hopes to reactivate this education, reaching back into the Christian's past life and connecting to his/her 'former' baptismal cleansing. The reader, as it were, walking under the 'Superliminaire' (the porch beam) should undergo the experience of moral purification on leaving the church porch and entering the church proper. The first poem to greet the reader inside 'The Church' is 'The Altar', which plays for the reader the equivalent role of the architectural and spiritual focal point of the altar in a church. *The*

Sacred Space: Writing *The Temple*', in *Sacred Text – Sacred Space*, ed. by Sterrett and Thomas, pp. 141-162 (pp. 147).

[95] Plett, p. 222.

[96] Tobin, p. 325.

[97] Stephanie Yearwood, 'The Rhetoric of Form in *The Temple*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23 (1988), 131-144 (p. 144).

Temple provides an interface between sacred text and sacred space. However, the very specific technique of topothesia fades out from this point, appearing again sporadically in later individual poems. There is no exiting 'The Church' at the end of *The Temple* equivalent to the readerly-architectural entering 'The Church'.

The hallowedness of church space is reinforced by Herbert's focus on the institutional rites that take place inside that space – rites in which Christians can participate in the transcendent. Thus, baptism, according to 'The Country Parson' is done 'in the presence of God' (p. 258). The young Herbert defended Church rites with vigour in 'Musae Responsoriae'.[98] Attachment to traditional ritual persists in *The Temple*, albeit in a calmer, more consensual manner. 'H. Baptisme (I)' defends the eponymous Church rite which is the precondition for God's forgiving the 'dark and shadie grove' (l. 1) of sin. Baptism enables Christians to 'look […] beyond' their fallen earthly state upward to 'the skie' (ll. 1-2); that is, to aspire heavenwards to the divine light which they hope will receive them. The church font's baptismal water reaches the ontologically distinct 'water […] above the heavens' (ll. 4-5). Baptism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the Christian to approach God. It is the first ritual passage in a lifelong process of self-purification. The speaker of 'H. Baptisme (II)' asks God to bring back a time close to the age of baptism: 'Let me be soft and supple to thy will, / Small to my self, to others milde' (ll. 8-9). Baptism is recalled in order to effectuate the speaker's attitude of submission before God and humility in life in the world.

The second Protestant sacrament, the Eucharist, is also a ritualistic means of purification. The positioning of the eucharistic poem 'Love (III)' at the end of 'The Church' underscores the rite's importance for Herbert; as do the many occasions in which the Eucharist is associated with spiritual solace and the experience of God's proximity in *The Temple*. 'The H. Communion', as Donald R. Dickson comments, 'gives us Herbert's richest account of the presence of the numinous in the sacraments'.[99] The poem evokes the eucharistic encounter (or 'communion') of the human 'captive soul' with the divine in its representation of a psychomachy between God and sin: 'Thou [God] creep'st into my breast […] Meeting sinnes force and art' (ll. 8-12). God effectively enters the fallen Christian during Communion and fights sin. The first part of the poem (ll. 1-24) mentions the ontological barrier of matter, which separates the soul from God. In the second part of the poem the ontological distance between God and man is attributed to the Fall:

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[98] George Herbert, *The Latin Poetry of George Herbert*, pp. 2-61.

[99] Donald R. Dickson, 'Between Transubstantiation and Memorialism: Herbert's Eucharistic Celebration', *GHJ*, 1.11 (1987), 1-14 (p. 11).

> For sure when Adam did not know
> To sinne, or sinne to smother;
> He might to heav'n from Paradise go,
> As from one room t'another
>   (ll. 33-6).

In prelapsarian days the division between God's space and man's space could be easily overcome. The rite of Communion, the poem concludes, is the way for Christians to regain access to God: 'Thou hast restor'd us to this ease / By this thy heav'nly bloud' (ll. 37-8). The communicant ingests the divine.

'The Invitation' invites the reader to the same rite where God is present: 'God is here prepar'd and drest' (l. 4). Johnson Bruce observes that '[n]o poem could be more overtly addressed to a congregation of readers […] the Eucharist, is offered to cure each ill'.[100] This liturgical poem offers inclusion in divine ubiquity: 'Where is All, there All should be' (l. 36). And yet, the inclusion remains an ideal, as the word 'should' indicates (they should be there, but there aren't). The word 'should' also implies that the 'Invitation' is encouraged by Church authority, which Christians must follow in order to attain God's presence in eucharistic rite. 'The Banquet' offers a comparable welcome to a 'sweet and sacred cheer' (l. 1); for nothing material, 'neither starre nor flower', 'Hath the power / Such a sweetnesse to impart' (ll. 19-21). The Eucharist is a taste of the transcendent: 'In a cup / sweetly he [i.e. God] doth meet my taste' (ll. 39-40). This occasion for the divine to descend to the communicant's lips is complemented by an inverse movement; the communicant flies to God: 'with it alone I flie / to the skie' and 'Him I view' (ll. 43-7). Here Communion provides the occasion for man to taste Heaven and the only ('alone') possibility for the Christian's ascent to God.

Herbert's idea of the Church enabling a spatial and ritual connection between God and man is reinforced by its organisation of a calendar of sacred days. Kuchar cogently argues that 'Herbert's approach to questions of religious authority partly turn[s] on his view of what it means to identify the church as the *corpus mysticum*. Along with others in the period, particularly Hooker and Andrewes, Herbert conceived of the church as a mystery more in the sense of a sacramental community unfolding in time than as a statically conceived body rooted in an apostolic ideal'.[101] Herbert's *corpus mysticum*

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[100] Johnson A. Bruce, 'The Audience Shift in George Herbert's Poetry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 1.35 (1995), 89-103 (p. 93).

[101] Gary Kuchar, *George Herbert and the Mystery of the Word*, p. 4.

integrates both sacred space and a cyclical sacred time. Mircea Eliade notes that 'the Christian liturgical year […] based on *periodic* and *real* repetition of the Nativity and the Passion, Jesus's death and resurrection', enables Christians to participate in 'personal and cosmic regeneration'.[102] Such was the age-old mission of the medieval Church, in continuity with pre-Christian spiritual life. Kate Giles's description of medieval sacred space insists on its cyclical and eternal character: 'the liturgical calendar and the regionalization of space within the nave also structured a competing, cyclical notion of time as the liturgical and metaphorical cursus', thus providing 'an eschatological framework within which past, present and future were combined'.[103] *The Temple* seeks to renew that mission; hence the insistence of the speaker of 'The British Church' (addressing that institution) that the beauty of the Church 'dates her letters from thy face, / When she does write' (ll. 5-6). As Hutchinson recalls, '[b]esides retaining many of the holy-days, the Church of England officially still reckoned the beginning of the year from Lady Day, which was also Herbert's practice in dating letters' (p. 514). This image of the Church's beauty dating letters not only makes an ornamentalist case but also conveys the idea of the Church as a numinous source of law ('letter') and time ('dates'), especially holy days. The Church's weekly day of ritual is 'Sunday'; the poem thus entitled celebrates God's day as a divine light that shines (*Sun*day) onto the other six worldly days of the week: 'O Day most calm, most bright, / The fruit of this, the next world's bud […] The week were dark, but for thy light' (ll. 1-2, 6). Wilcox perceptively observes how the poem's organic imagery evokes the link between this world and the next by reversing the 'natural order of growth – bud as the beginning, fruit as the culmination'; this reversal reflects 'the triumph of eternity over time'.[104] God transcends time and its earthly logic; ritual participation in God's day is a means for fallen man to apprehend that transcendent reality.[105]

Church orders sacred/secular time by consecrating Sunday as a sacred weekly day. Christmas is an annual holy day. Herbert's poem 'Christmas' begins (like Donne's 'Goodfriday') with the speaker riding a horse and sunk in worldly thought:

      All after pleasures as I rid one day,

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[102] Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, p. 150; translation mine. See also Stanley Stewart, 'Time and *The Temple*', *Studies in English Literature*, 6 (1966), 97-110, in John R. Roberts, *Essential Articles*, 363-73.

[103] Kate Giles, 'Seeing and Believing: Visuality and Space in Pre-Modern England', *World Archaeology*, 1.39 (2007), 105-121 (pp. 116-17).

[104] Wilcox, p. 283.

[105] 'Sunday' is Herbert's parson's 'day of joy' (*CP*, p. 241); it is worth noting the difference from early Andrewes's sabbatarianism mentioned above.

> My horse and I, both tir'd, bodie and minde,
> With full crie of affections, quite astray,
> I took up in the next inne I could finde
>   (ll. 1-4).

Herbert's poem imaginatively revivifies scripture: its motif of a traveller finding an inn not only *recalls* the Mary and Joseph's wandering, but the speaker *actually stumbles upon* the baby Jesus. He approaches Christ's 'contracted light', asking that it 'Furnish & deck my soul' (ll. 9, 13). After the speaker asks to wear Godly light, in a synesthetic manoeuvre, divine light merges with celebratory hymns sung by humans: 'His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine, / Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine' (ll. 33-4). This synesthesia – combined with the oxymoron of 'the grief / Of pleasures' (ll. 6-7) – evokes the mysterious actualisation of the impossible associated with this key ecclesiastical day, in which Christians can participate in a 'musick' that 'shine[s]'. Just as Christmas links Christians to the sacred story of Jesus' birth, so the holy date of 'Easter' allows for the paradoxical meeting of the temporal and the eternal in the liturgical poem of that name:

> Can there be any day but this,
> Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
> We count three hundred, but we misse:
> There is but one, and that one ever
> (ll. 27-30).

The sacred day of Easter effaces the countable plurality of typical secular calendar days, just as Sunday outshines the other six days of the week. These poems invite readers to participate in the Church's temporality which bridges finite man and infinite God.

The Church can also restore the loss of the Holy Spirit lamented in another liturgical poem, 'Whitsunday', through the regular, institutionalised commemoration of the event of the Spirit's descent to the Apostles. The poem calls on God to reinstate that divine presence:

> Lord, though we change, thou art the same;
> The same sweet God of love and light:
> Restore this day, for thy great name,
> Unto his ancient and miraculous right
> (ll. 25-8).

Unlike the speakers of Herbert's more personal devotional plaints, this speaker adopts a priestly tone with his inclusive 'we' when reminding his listeners that God has remained constant, despite humanity turning its back on Him. The speaker calls upon the 'Lord' (the absence of *The Temple*'s typical possessive adjective 'my' giving the poem a liturgical rather than lyrical feel) to restore the 'miraculous' Holy Spirit to the Christian community. The emphasis on liturgy is also found in 'The Sacrifice', whose refrain, 'Was ever a grief like mine', comes from both bible narrative (Jesus on the cross) and the liturgy of Holy Week. Isaac Stephens has shown that attachment to elements of liturgy, such as the Book of Common Prayer, is not necessarily tied to a conformism that rejects puritan piety.[106] Nonetheless, while shades of grey might exist among the lay population that Stevens focuses on, many poem titles in *The Temple* persistently convey a coherent conformist sense of liturgical time: 'Mattens', 'Church-Musick', 'Easter-Wings', 'Even-Song', 'A True Hymne' and 'Trinitie Sunday'. Just as topothesia integrates sacred space into *The Temple*, so these titles weave sacred time into the literary work, which conveys the hope that the Church can weave a cleansing hallowedness into the fallen world. Through these complex and literary means Herbert elaborates a cohesive and contextually pertinent view of the Church's vital role in humanity's dealings with God. However, the Church's conduits to the divine do not allow the Christian to be complacent about finding God inside a church.

Part III. Private Devotion in a Sacred Public Space

Herbert's celebration of the church as intermediary between God and man is offset by instances such as 'The Temper (I)', where the speaker expresses alienation from God and the cosmos: 'Those distances belong to thee [i.e. God] / The world's too little for thy tent' (ll. 10-11). Here the church is a safe but somewhat demeaning haven for a 'rack[ed]' (l. 9) devotional subject who imagines himself as a bird: 'O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid, / O let me roost and nestle there' (ll. 18-19). This zoomorphic image of shelter under a church roof conveys less God's majestic proximity than a certain desolation underlying the yearning for comfort in church. 'The Temper (I)' reminds the Christian that there is no sure encounter with the divine in church and no way of avoiding the spiritual suffering that the speaker hopes will be a means to self-improvement: 'but a tuning of my breast' (l. 23). Indeed, entering a church calls for intense self-examination. In 'Perirrhanterium' the commonplace 'God's house' becomes

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[106] Isaac Stephens, 'Confessional Identity in Early Stuart England: The "Prayer Book Puritanism" of Elizabeth Isham', *The Journal of British Studies*, 1.50 (2011), 24-47.

literalised; if the worshiper enters God's premises as a guest, s/he is subject to house rules. Above all, pious introspection is required:

> When once thy foot enters the church, be bare.
> God is more there, then thou: for thou art there
> Onely by his permission
> (ll. 403-5).

Since God, although invisible and immaterial, is 'more' present in church than the visible, material Christian, respectful body language, such as taking off one's hat, is requisite; as is correct mental attitude: 'make thy self all reverence and fear' (l. 406). Contrition must be more earnest 'In time of service':

> seal up both thine eies,
> And send them to thine heart; that spying sinne,
> They may weep out the stains by them did rise:
> Those doores being shut, all by the eare comes in
> (ll. 415-418).

The doors of the eyes must be 'shut' to the world, giving way to the more concentrated spiritual receptiveness of the ears. Meanwhile the inward eyes should make the devotional journey to the heart where their weeping accomplishes a penitential purging of the praying subject, who should remove sin that arose 'by them [i.e. the eyes]' and from temptations they beheld. The inward-voyaging gaze is compared to a hawk whose 'seal[ed]' eyes lead it undistracted to its destination. The worshiper is wilfully blind to the outer world: like a seeled hawk fully focused on its prey, the pious churchgoer's remorseful attention is concentrated on his/her sins. Just as the hawk accomplishes its goal through its master's training, so the self only becomes truly repentant through taxing devotion.

The ecclesiastical demand for respect and vigorous self-questioning is tellingly formulated in 'Lent':

> The humble soul compos'd of love and fear
> Begins at home, and layes the burden there,
> When doctrines disagree.
> He says, in things which use hath justly got,
> I am a scandal to the Church, and not
> The Church is so to me

(ll. 6-12).

Herbert sees in established custom or 'use' (l. 10) sufficient reason both to end critical inquiry that targets the Church and to ground the Church's authority over Lent and the abstemious practices it prescribes in that holy period.[107] The poem echoes the defence of custom in Article 34 of the Thirty Nine Articles which provided, as Prior points out, 'the core of the conformist position' defending the royal jurisdiction over Church practices.[108]

The scriptural injunction to ascetic self-discipline works in tandem with the Church: 'The Scriptures bid us *fast*; the Church sayes, *now*' (l. 4). Here Herbert celebrates what Achsah Guibbory terms a 'Ceremonialist ideology' which 'valued the ties to the past [and] the submission of the individual to humanly instituted power'.[109] It is not merely ties to the past that are important, ties to an ontologically distinct time are underscored in 'Lent': the ecclesiastical institution (and not individuals reading scripture) acts as the clarifying agent that decides on when – in the temporal world – the Bible's eternal law is applied. The Christian should not question the Church's authority in this or in any other matter: if there is any 'scandal' to be corrected, it stems from the individual Christian's sin.[110] Any critical scrutiny that takes place should be aimed exclusively at the self. If, through such scrutiny, the Christian is aware of his sin and assiduously conforms to scripture and Church he will become worthy of God's presence: 'Perhaps my God, though he be far before, / May turn, and take me by the hand' (ll. 40-1). God may grace His house with a visit.

Herbert, staunch defender of the English Church, is not complacent about the institution whose collective spiritual task is implemented by 'brittle' ('The Windows') humans. 'The Church Militant' is a historical panorama portraying successive Christian institutions that become corrupt shortly after becoming established. In line with the Protestant view of the Catholic Church (and reminiscent of a recurrent feature of monastic institutions), institutionalised Christianity declines in spiritual purity as it settles. Its less contaminated offshoot flees westward only to become corrupt in its turn.

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[107] Herbert makes a similar point in *CP*, chapter 24, pp. 262-3.

[108] 'Whosoever […] doth openly breach the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly […] as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate' (Article 35); see Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church*, p. 160.

[109] Guibbory, p. 6.

[110] A similar concern about 'Scandall' versus 'obeying authority' occurs in *CP*, p. 263. Tobin quotes *OED* on 'scandal': 'something that hinders reception of faith' (p. 434).

This tragic poem thus has a posthumous anti-Laudian twist, since those whom Laud persecuted fled westward across the Atlantic. According to Izaak Walton, the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge had to be persuaded by Nicholas Ferrar (who oversaw the publication of *The Temple* shortly after Herbert's death) to have Herbert's reference to 'Religion […] Readie to passe to *American* strand' (ll. 235-6) kept in.[111] Herbert seems to be speculating that the piety of some religious émigrés of his own day would bear fruit in the New World, while Old Word religion would decay. There is no need to see an endorsement of puritan expatriation here, since settling in the New World could be envisaged as good religious (and patriotic) work in itself given the European colonial mentality encouraged by the Spanish example; hence 'The Country Parson' advises younger brothers to 'busie' themselves 'in those new Plantations, and discoveryes, which are not only a noble, but also as they may be handled, a religious imployment' (p. 278).[112] From a literary point of view the poem underscores the inexorability of sin, attaching to it the Virgilian motif of the flight of civilisation westwards – motif that was Christianised and applied to the westward migration of the true Church.[113] Sin makes flight inevitable, as Richey comments,

> [b]ecause the temple always contains within it not only Christ but also 'Antichrist,' not only the 'true Church' but also those pretenders who would displace it, 'Sinne' can be found in a range of corrupt imitations that extend far beyond Rome […] God enters site after site within *The Temple*, not because these places are 'holy,' but because they are not.[114]

We have seen that for Herbert space can be sacred; however, Richey rightly sees holiness as conditional on individual piety. The Church cannot fully triumph over sin in this world, but its attempts are not vain.

Herbert's church is the holiest place one can find on earth, even if both building and institution are fallible because made by fallen humans and built with mere matter. *The Temple*'s subtitles, 'The Church' and 'The Church Militant', recall the Augustinian distinction between the city of men and the ideal city of God. Following Alaric's sack of Rome in 410, Augustine, in *The City of God*, argued that Rome, although the capital of a Christian empire, was vulnerable to attack by 'barbarians' because it was built with the hands of men contaminated by sin. The true Church of the city of God, however,

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[111] Izaak Walton, *Lives*, p. 315.

[112] Herbert's family was involved in the Virginia Company; see Hutchinson (pp. 543 and 546-47).

[113] Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 108-12.

[114] Richey, 89.

was invulnerable. Likewise, Herbert's Church pertains to fallen human affairs; but the Church Militant will continue its march to End Time, when it will become the Church Triumphant. To have a chance of participating in that march, it behoves the Christian to purify the true site of reformation, which is not the Church, but the self. That purification also requires that the English Crown's subjects conform to the Church of England, warts and all.

Stanley Fish highlights how 'The Church Militant', as well as being collective in its scope, embraces personal piety. For Fish, the poem portrays a vision not only of the active Church but also of Herbert's Christian, who is subjected to 'the necessity of struggle and toil' for a 'perfection [that] will never be attained, at least not in this life'.[115] Fish sees 'The Church Militant' as an allegory of the earthbound Christian's unrelenting, individual struggle against sin. For Herbert's Christian 'Militant' the struggle against sin is both individual and collective. Just as the collective 'Church Militant' reflects the individual militant Christian, so personal poems echo collective religious life. Sidney Gottlieb finds in Herbert's 'Conscience' the interpenetration of the individual and the collective in the expression of public issues 'in private modes': the poem evokes 'a danger not only to one's peace of mind but also to one's own church and society. The images and descriptions set the poem simultaneously in the inner and outer worlds'.[116] The sense of interpenetration of the public and private also applies to *The Temple* as a whole; the work's personal focus provides a framework for considering the collective facets of religious life that fashion the individual Christian. In 'Conscience' the ideological enemy (puritanism) is internalised as the prattling voice of conscience that the speaker seeks to 'expell' (l. 105). Herbert employs a consensually allusive language due to his desire not to excite polemic; but expelling ones enemies, whatever the idiom, is hardly consensual. Avoiding public polemic (in which individuals stick possessively to their positions) is a valiant attempt to reroute the contention of the public sphere towards the site of the self. But that self is fashioned by public ideologies. Ultimately, Herbert's only way to be received by God is for the Christian to practice a conformist-coloured self-scrutiny. Herbert might have hoped that an inward focus would relieve the Church of pressure from self-assertive individuals. Yet, in the decades preceding the civil war, this call effectively condemned Christians who dared to criticise State religion, even if they wanted to remain part of the Church they sought to improve. Under Laud's uncompromising conformist rule the State would persecute such Christians with ferocity. How would Herbert have reacted to the great

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[115] Stanley E. Fish, *The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 154 and 155.

[116] Sidney Gottlieb, 'Herbert's Case of "Conscience": Public or Private Poem?', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 1.25 (1985), 109-126 (p. 111).

crisis of the Church that led to civil war after his death? Would he have stood by his beloved Church? Would he have been put off by 'the strongly anti-puritan and politically activist elements within avant-guard conformity'?[117] Would he have come round to blaming the fallen individuals that ran the established Church for betraying their mission derived from scripture? Or would he have vacillated between both tendencies? We can never know. We can, nonetheless, observe the premonitions of the crisis in the tensions running through Herbert's poetry and nourishing its inventiveness.

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[117] Milton, p. 532.