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## Productive Discord and George Herbert's "Artillerie"

The body of metaphors George Herbert puts forth in defining the nature of prayer and the shifting complexion of that body dominate the mood and course of poems in *The Temple*, a collection Herbert referred to as "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master" (Walton 110). For Herbert, these poems are prayers and many bear the marks of conflict. Speaking to this conflict is "Prayer" (I), in which Herbert maps out his ideology concerning the full breadth of functions and capacities prayer might have, but in mapping out this ideology Herbert inevitably suggests the range of power his own poems possess. As Herbert's poem defines it, prayer—that is, any exchange between humankind and God, whether liturgical or private, spoken or written, lyrical or other—is not merely "the Churches banquet," or "Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse," it is also an "Engine against th' Almightye, sinners towre, / Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear" ("Prayer [I]" 1, 9, 5-6).<sup>1</sup> It is an instrument of combat, a weapon capable of and perhaps most effective when inflicting violence. As a pillar thrusting humankind into the sphere of God, it is a fortress designed to protect and even advance sieges. It is God's own medium used against him.

While the violence of Herbert's language makes clear the effectiveness of prayer, the poem is far more reserved in answering the question, "Effective for what?" The closest it comes to an answer is in its closing enigmatic definition—"something understood"—which Joseph Summers refers to as "both an abandonment of metaphor and its final crowning" (183), whereas E. B. Greenwood considers it "a conclusion in which nothing is concluded" (28).<sup>2</sup> In discussing the mystical theology in the poem, Andrew James Harvey has recently added that while this "something understood" gets the last word in the poem, and in that sense "the greatest weight and emphasis, it is also the least assertive of the twenty-seven assertions. It steps back from the heretofore cataphatic program, and, if it can be said to assert anything, it is that language cannot suffice." All previous definitions find themselves "trumped by a non-definition, the only phrase in the poem devoid of metaphor" (135-6).

Of course Herbert is being deliberately evasive, providing the capstone to what Mario Di Cesare calls the poet's finest "raid on the inarticulate" (325). But given the poem's martial metaphors, Herbert is also suggesting that this "something" resists understanding or adequate assimilation in the absence of grappling and sweat, that there is something finally unproductive and flawed about interactions with God characterized by unending amity

and accord. As Harvey points out, the earlier definitions are "in no way canceled out or nullified.... The positive theology of the first thirteen-and-a-half lines, rather, is paradoxically affirmed; these lines are necessary steps on the ascent toward a greater contemplation beyond language" (136). Contained among those steps, let us not forget, is uncompromising aggression.

The notion of grappling with God finds its precedent most ostensibly, at least in material form, in the Old Testament figure of Jacob. And many poems in *The Temple* read to a large extent as figurative reenactments of the scene in which Jacob tenaciously holds on to his opponent, insisting, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26).<sup>3</sup> Certainly Herbert had this instance in mind throughout much of *The Temple*, his own verbal grip on and exertions against God recalling Jacob's own physical grips and exertions.

But where Jacob's biblical adversary does not defeat Jacob, or even overpower him enough to abandon the altercation, Herbert's speakers at multiple points acknowledge the superior strength of God, emphasizing the "brittle[ness]" of humanity, the idea that we are mere "crumb[s] of dust," "weak disabled thing[s]," "weed[s]," or, perhaps more optimistically, "flowers that glide" ("The Windows" [2]; "The Temper [I]" [14]; "The Crosse" [17, 30]; "The Flower" [44]). In short, we are no match for God.

The bold imagery of "Prayer" (I), then, so striking in its insistence upon our formidability rather than fragility, must give us pause. Why do we figure here as thoroughly equipped, even gruesomely competent, players against God? Moreover, how does this incongruity infiltrate Herbert's poetry? Do we see within his poems the force and strategic maneuvering of an overmatched, feeble contestant, or of one courageously willing and able to pierce Christ's side anew, one from whom God cannot escape unless permitted?

Certainly we do well to recognize the precise location of this potential against God. For these metaphors articulate the *means* of engagement, the *method* of encounter—the weaponry, rather than any human who would employ it. Ultimately it is the discourse directed at God that can penetrate so viscerally and give strength to do the otherwise unfathomable. It is the single exception to the rule, but one capable of inverting the ranks until God becomes vulnerable and we take on power. It is an anomaly, a case in which we might constrain and compel the impregnable and divine. It is the incarnation reprised.

Of course to liken the historical piercing of Christ to Herbert's verbal skewering is to overlook something fundamental. That is, we must concede that any instance of addressing God, even in opposition, can serve as a rejection only to a certain point. As much as we may position ourselves in contradiction to the divine, the very fact of our engagement represents a

certain mode of collaboration. We might assail and attack, but in order to, we necessarily approach; we move in his direction. Here we find a level of investment absent from the soldier's practical, even perfunctory, piercing. As "The Bag" illustrates, in Herbert's manner of piercing, a "blow upon [Christ's] side" becomes a slot into which we might stuff deliveries for God, deliveries Christ furthermore supplements in our favor. And as the speaker of the poem notes, even Christ's friends "use [him] in this kinde" (ll. 29, 37-38).<sup>4</sup> Ultimately the warring between Herbert's speakers and God parallels that between Jacob and his own opponent in that each case represents, as Garret Keizer puts it, a "hold which is always, potentially, an embrace" (23). Discord does not stand in opposition to cordiality in this framework but rather nurtures it.

This dynamic of conflict governs *The Temple* to such a degree that we might consider the collection throughout as a series of variations and maneuverings within this hold. Even those moments in which all scuffling seems past, and we hear overwhelmingly the notes of harmony and hymn, we must qualify. It may well be that in these moments Herbert's speakers find themselves in the posture of embrace, but the inverse of Keizer's statement holds equally true: those embraces are yet potential holds. To be in this type of contact is to secure the possibility, even the promise, of grasps growing firmer and clutches becoming tighter. As much as we might be inclined to catalog only cries of complaint, threats, or pleas as moments within this hold, we should remember that John Donne himself ascribed the greater force not to these but rather to expressions of cheer and reverence and thanks, insisting that "By Prayer we incline him, we bend him, but by praise we bind him.... In Prayer we sue to him, but in our Praise we sue him himselfe" (49). Indeed Herbert's own poem on the matter, "Praise" (I), shows a speaker not so deft in offering praise as one who, as Chana Bloch notes, "knows how to drive a bargain" (267).

Of course Herbert's concept of prayer gives space to far more than Donne's treatment of it here appears to, at least in regard to basic terminology, as Herbert's conceptualization absorbs virtually all forms of experience by the extremes it takes in, so long as that experience involves some mode of intercourse between God and humankind.<sup>5</sup> Praise, however cast, is for Herbert one of infinite postures within prayer. And prayer, as much as it is "The land of spices," is also "the souls bloud."<sup>6</sup> It is mundane and supernal, "Heaven in ordinarie" as well as "The milkie way" ("Prayer" [I], ll. 11-14). It is the place where polarities meet, most notably perhaps, those of serenity and hostility. For in it we find both "softnesse" and a "spear."

Remarking on this prodigious stretch, Sharon Cadman Seelig observes that the very poem intending to define prayer is "itself an oxymoron, written in one of the tightest, most restrictive of poetic forms, but syntactically and rhetorically a series of riddling epithets, neither connected by conjunctions nor bound together in clauses." Such an unlikely synthesis, she observes,

"suggests the nature of prayer itself: it is something in which man participates but of which he understands very little.... As the sonnet's lack of completed statement and its riddling epithets imply, prayer cannot be defined" (37).

Prayer cannot be defined, it would seem, but by circumscribing all, collapsing the "six-daies world" into "an hour," as it were. Not unlike the classical figure of Proteus, the proper conceptualization of prayer for Herbert resists all forms of stasis or uniformity. When we attempt to seize it, secure it under a fixed description, it morphs into a new shape, slips from our grasp, fills up a new space between, around, or among God and humankind. The inconclusiveness and antitheses upon which "Prayer" (I) thrives insist that prayer can be adumbrated and pointed at, but never determined in whole. It is a "limitless discourse," as Mark Taylor observes, and as such involves continual change (76).

Herbert's resolved indeterminacy in defining prayer not only captures the mystery surrounding Jacob's encounter with God but has the effect of implicitly bracketing all speakers in *The Temple* with God. Even Herbert's poems which do not directly address God work into this broad conceptualization of prayer as they are nevertheless uttered with God as known, intended audience.<sup>7</sup> By stretching our understanding of prayer to such heights and depths in this way, Herbert urges readers to consider *The Temple* throughout as that: a prayer for which "Prayer" (I) might serve as index.<sup>8</sup> Other poems might be argued to function in this way to a certain extent, and certainly Herbert intended his collection to be read in this collaborative spirit—"This verse mark[ing] that, and both... mak[ing] a motion / Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie" ("The Holy Scriptures" [II], ll. 5-6)—but I do not think any poem so thoroughly glosses and accounts for all moments within *The Temple*, even its very construction, as this poem must.

Just as all forms of exchange between humankind and God—whether characterized by applause or appeal, agreement or opposition—constitute instances of prayer for Herbert, they also, according to "Prayer" (I), constitute junctures in which the incarnation and crucifixion itself might be replayed. There is a productive violence more or less at work across the tones and voices of *The Temple*, a potential for blood to be spilled, whether in the form of praise, petition, or reproach. God is obliged to struggle against humankind even as humankind struggles against surrender and fights to be heard, coaxing God from one position to another.

# I.

Throughout *The Temple* speakers allude to this martial vein and remark upon its inevitable presence, its incalculable force, and finally its implications. "Life is a businesse... / ever in warres," one speaker admits; "how suddenly / May our requests thine eare invade!" another exclaims; "Behold, thy dust dothe stirre, / It moves, it creeps, it aims at thee," one speaker warns,

while yet another narrates the occasion in which he "threatned to observe [God's] strict decree" ("Employment" (II), ll. 16-17; "Prayer" (II), ll. -3; "Longing," ll. 37-38; "The Holdfast," ll. 1-2; "Nature," ll. 5-6).

There is, moreover, shrewd calculation. As the speaker of "The Storm" reckons, if he cannot break down God's door, at the very least he can disturb God's peace and disrupt the veneration given him:

A throbbing conscience spurred by remorse  
    Hath a strange force:  
 It quits the earth, and mounting more and more,  
    Dares to assault thee, and besiege thy doore.

There it stands knocking, to thy musicks wrong,  
    And drowns the song.  
 Glorie and honour are set by till it  
    An answer get (ll. 9-16).

Standing outside God's inner chamber, the speaker can throw off the melody and rhythm inside with his own commotion. Plain and simple worship not only finds itself interrupted and overtaken but altogether suspended: if and only if God responds may the ceremonies of adoration resume.

At the same time the registers of love and hostility merge. The tactics designed for the warrior may prove equally effective for courtier. The speaker of "Thanksgiving" searches for God's love which he will "turn back on [him]," even as the speaker of "Discipline" observes that "Love's a man of warre" (ll. 47, 22). Indeed, the very collection that Herbert concedes is fraught with strife culminates in the poem "Love (III)."

In all cases, whether aiming at God from afar or storming his very door, the suggestion is that moving against implies moving toward. But precisely how this happens and what takes place in the process is less clear. Perhaps our closest hint comes from the speaker of "Discipline" when he contends that

...my heart's desire  
    Unto thine is bent:  
    I aspire  
 To a full consent (ll. 5-8).

In a poem where stanzas take the shape of bows and arrows, the speaker here combines the image of shooting in God's direction with the notion of bending his will toward God's.<sup>9</sup> Full consent is the goal, and bending one's bow back at God is the means to approaching it. "Let me be soft and supple to thy will," the speaker of "Holy Baptism" (II) asks, as though he himself were the bow that God might bend (l. 8). Still, the precise mechanics of moving from assault to assent, from stiffness to pliancy, remain uncertain.

## II.

There is perhaps no better poem in *The Temple* to investigate when it comes to violence and will-bending than "Artillerie," which resides somewhere between the middle and end of the collection. It is a poem Sibyl Lutz Severance calls "one of Herbert's most intricate lyrics" (111) and Richard Strier acknowledges has been mostly neglected though a key poem of "The Church" (97). For in this poem Herbert not only provides an instance of warfare but offers explicit commentary on the mechanics of such battling in general.

The poem begins in what Daniel H. Strait would describe as "the perceptual space of an experience already over" (58). The speaker recalls:

As I one ev'ning sat before my cell,  
 Me thoughts a starre did shoot into my lap.  
 I rose, and shook my clothes, as knowing well,  
 That from small fires comes oft no small mishap.  
     When suddenly I heard one say,  
     *Do as thou usest, disobey,*  
     *Expell good motions from thy breast,*  
*Which have the face of fire, but end in rest* (ll. 1-8).

What is particularly noteworthy is the central role played by perception and what would seem to be solid reasoning at the outset. Immediately the speaker finds himself, as he perceives it, under threat, or attacked. A star shoots into his lap, he rises, shakes it off, and explains his reasoning: "from small fires comes oft no small mishap" (ll. 2-4). But a voice opposes this reaction, scolding the speaker, telling him—sarcastically—to go ahead, proceed as usual.

In the first moments of encounter, therefore, the very basis for the speaker's action is attacked. Either what the speaker "know[s] well," he is essentially told, is not reliable, or what appears to be sound reasoning—that "from small fires comes oft no small mishap"—he wrongly applies. Putting into practice truths the speaker trusts becomes an instance of disobedience, so that from the beginning of battle, what is spiritually at stake is bound up with matters of epistemology. Indeed the voice reminds the speaker of the discrepancy between semblances and hidden realities as it assures him that where fire is presented, peace might rather be promised.

In his recent study of Herbert's attention to the body in time, Strait argues that Herbert's "attunement to the body operates not only amidst moral struggle, but also as part of a perceptual ordeal that unfolds moment to moment at the threshold of another modality of seeing." Certainly when the speaker of "Artillerie" perceives a star shot into his lap and responds as he does and then later writes about it, he "confronts the difficulty of 'seeing' from within temporal experience." Not unlike the speaker in "The Temper"

(II), for Strait, the speaker of "Artillerie" too has "fail[ed] to perceive God's motions amidst his own temporal trials," trials which themselves "entail perceptual demands about what counts as experience." This is the essence of what the speaker is told after he instinctively tries to shake off the star. And this perceptual blunder, it would seem, as well as the action emerging as a result, has become chronic, ingrained ("as thou usest"). In the context of such literal bodily assault—the *sine qua non* for the poem itself—and the corresponding pressure it places on perception, we invariably sense with Strait that such "afflictions, flaws, failure, and difficulties" become the site of opportunity in terms of "refin[ing] perceptual awareness. Not only does the body inhabit difficult moments; it also widens, and struggles to 'see' within, an increasing demanding perceptual field" (54-7).

What we "know" and, then again, what counts as reliable knowledge in the spiritual life, often expressed through poetic metaphor, is a matter of concern throughout *The Temple*. Herbert's speakers at various points acknowledge the topsy-turvy nature of divine truths and alternately accept, reject, savor, and resent them, given their absurdity from an earthly standpoint. But those who would pattern their lives off Scripture must unpack and parse out the meaning behind literary tropes just as they must make sense of statements which in and of themselves appear to lack all reason. For in the life that cleaves to God, as Scripture and Herbert present it, profits become losses, ratios reverse. The singular surpasses the plural. As one speaker of *The Temple* acknowledges, "All wordly joys go less / To the one joy of doing kindness" ("Church-porch," l. 17). And where weakness and strength are concerned, the former trumps the latter, for "All Solomon's sea of brass and world of stone / Is not so dear to [God] as one good groan" ("Sion," ll. 17-18).

But Herbert's speakers, even while granting the validity of these spiritual realities, repeatedly hedge and resist. For all their expressions of allegiance to a heavenly rubric, they nevertheless turn again and again to tally up the losses and profits of this world in comparison with those involved in "climb[ing] to God." As the speaker of "The Pearl. Matth. 13" points out, the exchange may not appear equitable (l. 40). He acknowledges:

My stuff is flesh, not brass; my senses live,  
And grumble oft, that they have more in me  
Than he that curbs them, being but one to five:  
Yet I love thee (ll. 27-30).

As one of five poems in *The Temple* explicitly targeting Scripture in its title, "The Pearl" recalls the biblical parable of the man who sells all he has in order to buy a pearl of extravagant value.<sup>10</sup> Yet the speaker, as Strier notes, "interprets the parable as treating the way to the kingdom of heaven rather than the value of the kingdom" (87).

Herbert provides three stanzas, each of which elaborate for nine lines on the speaker's projected sale: the ways of learning, honor, and pleasure,

respectively. After each nine-line segment, in which the speaker's relish for these ways is also suggested, the speaker without logical transition concludes, "Yet I love thee." The fourth and final stanza begins as though the exchange is about to take place—these worldly ways in exchange for God—but is marked immediately by intense ambivalence. Initially the speaker appears to be "fl[y]ing" to God, but by the end of the stanza, we are told that God has "let down" his "silk twist" to the speaker and taught him "how by it / To climbe" (ll. 33-40).

Bloch asks the question the poem appears to answer on the surface but in effect begs further: "Why should a man be moved to give up 'all that he had' for a single 'pearl,' no matter how valuable? Might not such an action seem foolish, perhaps even at times in his own eyes?" Regarding the parable in Matthew she admits, "The merchant... chooses without hesitation—or so it appears"; the "brisk verbal sequence *found-sold-bought*" bears "the ring of *veni vidi vici*, which makes the choice seem almost too easy." In the poem, however, where Bloch observes Herbert "enlarg[ing] upon these few lines of Scripture," supplying to "bare action... a complexity of motives, of inner tensions," she finds a disproportion unmatched in *The Temple*. She explains, "Ten packed pentameter lines, piling example upon example, are offset by a two-foot bob: 'Yet I love thee.' The value of the speaker's entire inventory is outweighed each time in that terse refrain" (40-1).

On one level the speaker is admittedly asserting his love for God as the counterweight to learning, honor, and pleasure, and the structure of each stanza is certainly meant to mimic the lopsidedness of the event in Matthew 13—of exchanging "all" for one ("The Pearl," l. 31). But as much as the poem's refrain intends to answer Bloch's question, that it is because of the speaker's love for God that he is relinquishing these ways, the poem's structure remains insistent upon that question, particularly beside the muddled statements of its concluding stanza. Why *should* the speaker make this exchange? Does he himself know?

The poem makes explicit some things the speaker knows, but the list includes no detailed rationale for the exchange.<sup>11</sup> Instead each stanza opens with the repeated "I know" and discusses the world's ways. Repeatedly it is a claim of love ("Yet I love thee") which finally cuts short these discussions, and with each claim of love, the discussion ends, whether in hesitance or assurance. As Michael Schoenfeldt acknowledges, "The poem hinges on whether 'yet' is contradictive or conjunctive, whether, that is, the speaker still loves God amid this knowledge, or whether his experience of God is the sum of this knowledge" (152). Whatever the case, in as much as the poem is weighing the world's ways against those of God, it is also weighing what the speaker "know[s]" against what he "loves."

Of course if we affirm that one must know God to love him, and the speaker indeed loves him, his knowledge of God must implicitly expand while learning, honor, and pleasure contract, in terms of heavenly import.



In this reading we hear the assured speaker. But within "The Pearl" as it stands, these heaps of worldly knowledge, visually and structurally, weigh upon the speaker's love of God, so that what stands out in the final stanza, as an extension of the earlier stanzas, is not the "commodities" of the exchange but instead the speaker's near-fixed attention on "the main sale," or what he is giving up. Here the vocabulary of knowing enters with special stress. Regarding the ways of learning, honor, and pleasure, the speaker concludes:

I know all these, and have them in my hand.  
 Therefore not sealed, but with open eyes  
 I flie to thee, and fully understand  
 Both the main sale, and the commodities;  
 And at what rate and price I have thy love;  
 With all the circumstances that may move (ll. 31-36).

Lines 31-33 emphasize "know[ing]," "open eyes," and "full understand[ing]," most conspicuously in terms of the speaker's loss, for all the preceding stanzas equate what the speaker "know[s]," or this "main sale," with what is being renounced rather than gained. At the same time Herbert contrasts being "sealed" with having "open eyes," suggesting that to proceed in this way is not only to have one's eyes not-sealed but also one's soul. Indeed, "not sealed" hovers over and nearly eclipses all else surrounding it, and all the more so when the speaker has just confessed to be yet holding onto learning, honor, and pleasure. All this suggestiveness beside the disproportion of the earlier stanzas finally encourages the reading that it is in fact the "rate and price" for the speaker more than what it has cost Christ that is under consideration, even as the poem resolves.

And yet the turn comes three lines earlier in this final stanza than it has in those prior. The closing four lines of the poem read:

Yet through the labyrinths, not my groveling wit,  
 But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,  
 Did both conduct and teach me, how by it  
 To climbe to thee (ll. 37-40).

Does the speaker understand all he is gaining from the exchange? If so, the poem provides little evidence. And while by virtue of their past tense, the closing lines are perhaps incontrovertible, the finality of any transaction has hardly been established. The image readers leave the poem with is split between past and present, between a speaker flying and climbing, and attempting either with "all these... in hand." If we are to gather by the last lines that in teaching the speaker how to climb, God has taught him to do so with empty hands, even perhaps closed eyes—and by doing so the exchange has been made determinately—the speaker has said little to foster that reading.

## III.

The strains and anxieties that come to the fore in "The Pearl" are crucial to the dynamics both at work and discussed in "Artillerie." If the unsubstantiated declarations of love in "The Pearl" repeatedly outweigh the worldly stockpiles the speaker takes such pains to itemize, as Bloch proposes they do, I would suggest that they outweigh them from a perspective the speaker has not yet assimilated. And while the speaker may have been taught to climb, I suspect he has not yet learned entirely how.<sup>12</sup> But the value of "The Pearl" lies precisely here, in its unflinching elaboration of the tensions accompanying the individual who intends to forsake all for one. Rather than centering around the fact of the exchange and the incomparable worth of God's kingdom, as Matthew 13 does, this poem illustrates the challenges of living according to, and perpetually sensing, spiritual truths—the very problem registered in the opening of "Artillerie."

What the speaker of "Artillerie" knows, to what extent he knows it, and the realm in which that knowledge has value are matters which form the basis of the uneasy tension we find in "The Pearl" and seem to reside at the core of all conflict within *The Temple*. It comes as little surprise, then, that in "Artillerie," a poem explicitly delineating such conflict, these concerns are addressed immediately.

Understandings, which shape perspectives and, in turn, guide actions and utterances, not only drive speakers and God to battle but become the very ground over and for which the battle is fought. As Jean Louis Chretien would put it, the struggle becomes at once "for truth" and "with truth" (23). It should not startle us, therefore, when the speaker in response to the star and censoring voice says:

I, who had heard of musick in the spheres,  
 But not of speech in starres, began to muse:  
 But turning to my God, whose ministers  
 The starres and all things are; If I refuse,  
     Dread Lord, said I, so oft my good;  
     Then I refuse not ev'n with bloud  
     To wash away my stubborn thought:  
     For I will do, or suffer what I ought (ll. 9-16).

The speaker's response is to consider what he is and is not familiar with: music in the heavens but not stars speaking. And so he thinks. But that thinking is cut short by his understanding that all things, including stars, serve God, and it is this understanding that determines the speaker's choice to address God.

The substance of the speaker's reply, however, hinges entirely on the validity of what God has suggested in saying, "*Do as thou usest, disobey, /*

*Expell good motions from thy breast.*" Folded into this pseudo-imperative is the perspective that the speaker habitually disobeys, or "[e]xpell[s] good motions from [his] breast." When the speaker replies by saying that he "refuse[s] not ev'n with blood / To wash away [his] stubborn thought," he prefaces that statement with the conditional *if*: "If I refuse, / ...so oft my good." The speaker's final avowal that he "will do, or suffer what [he] ought" can be taken as a further extension of that conditional, as the entire *if-then* statement leads to it by way of colon. *If* the speaker so often rejects his good, *then* he will reject cleansing, regardless of cost; whether the cost, or "blood," is the speaker's or Christ's is left ambiguous, but either way the line must read as a sharp thrust. Finally *if* these refusals are his habit, and not even blood will tear him from his thought, he is *by that fact* agreeing to do or endure whatever he must.

The savage tone of these lines returns the sarcasm of God's original address. On the one hand they unfold as admission of simple cause-and-effect. If the speaker is such a veteran in refusing, naturally nothing will make him yield, regardless of consequence. At the same time, however, these lines insinuate a threat at the price of blood. If God insists upon his perspective—that the speaker repeatedly chooses against his salvation—then the speaker will refuse him eternally. The speaker is making a demand centered around perspective: he is demanding God reconsider his.

Such a reading no doubt emphasizes the severity lurking in lines 12-16. However, by giving it, I mean to supplement rather than supplant the more customary reading that, rather than resisting, the speaker is here offering up his surrender, agreeing to clear himself *even if* it takes blood to do so. Strier, A.L. Clements, and William Nestrick have all forwarded this reading of surrender while gesturing momentarily to a certain ambiguity inherent. Strier affirms that "There is no doubt of [the] sincerity" of the speaker here but admits that the tone is "extremely difficult to capture" (99). Clements argues that the speaker "cannot refuse to wash away his stubborn thought with Christ's blood" but footnotes the possibility that the speaker "may still be insisting on his own will and way" (268-9). Nestrick sees the speaker "stand[ing] up to his dread Lord," but in the sense that he is "offer[ing] to 'make good' his disobedience" by proposing to spill his own blood for clearance. Even so, Nestrick admits, "As soon as the speaker becomes vocal to God he becomes equivocal" (122).

This equivocation sensed by all three critics, I suggest, comes both as a counterthrust to God's sarcasm and as an expression of the speaker's division between conflicting modes of reality. It is perhaps the unavoidable condition of those inhabiting "divided and distinguished worlds," as Sir Thomas Browne, Herbert's contemporary, explains; "for though there bee but one [world] to sense, there are two to reason; the one visible, the other invisible" (37). The tone of stanza two is difficult to capture *because* its speaker is being thoroughly sincere: his breast is open, and it is torn between the logic of disparate worlds. As readers we feel the speaker pulled simultaneously

by the impulse to resist and then again yield, to protect his perspective and yet subject it to God's attacks. The "repeated turns of reason, signalled by the insistent 'but' and 'yet'(eleven in all)'" in the poem that Severance notes (113), show a speaker straddling two spheres—a necessary prequel, it might be admitted, for stepping into God's.

Such ambivalence on the speaker's part forces engagement from readers, reanimating within us the speaker's own divided state. As Seelig observes, "In approaching the text cautiously, as readers attempting to grasp the shape of the poet's work, we are engaged in an undertaking in some ways analogous to the poet's own attempt to perceive his world truly." She adds that "It has been customary to emphasize the tendency of Herbert's poems to return to a stable religious and artistic base, but that is to overlook the very vigorous, indeed violent, athletic experience of reading the *Temple*" (6, 11).

Surely a reading of stanza two focused primarily on its stance of surrender overlooks this violence and athleticism, particularly in a poem whose title targets the means of combat rather than surrender. Indeed, where Barbara Leah Harman sees the speaker of stanza one making the mistake of "reading both too quickly and too finally, and therefore of *misreading*" (*Costly Monuments* 156), it seems vital that we as readers refrain from doing likewise in the following stanza. For in dismissing the violent strain of opposition, we repeat the speaker's action as we, too, dispense with the apparently problematic but much-intended drama.

#### IV.

After nodding to the difficulty of articulating the exact tenor of stanza two, Strier concludes that "Whatever the ultimate value of the position at which stanza 2 arrives, it is certainly an enormous advance over the prudential and openly self-satisfied mode of stanza 1, and it is certainly not to be lightly disregarded" (100). On the one hand I agree with the advancement Strier sees. According to his reading of stanza two, the speaker's submission undoubtedly moves the persona away from arrogance and toward if not fully into a posture of compliance. However, the other voice of stanza two—the vicious undercurrent—amplifies any arrogance perceived in stanza one as the speaker here scorns submission, though certainly not openly. But this, too, I argue is integral to the speaker's development. That is, as much as the speaker's underhanded attack may strike readers as blasphemous and crude, the progress of the poem makes clear that this underlying scorn or attack, not unlike the original attack from God, is a positive one.

By the third stanza, both God and Herbert's speaker have issued attacks. After the speaker's claim in stanza two that he "will do or suffer what [he] ought," however, he readjusts his position, interjecting,

But I have also starres and shooters too,  
 Born where thy servants both artilleries use.  
 My tears and prayers night and day do woove,  
 And work up to thee; yet thou dost refuse (ll. 17-20).

Whichever stance one reads at the end of stanza two, it is as though the speaker remembers his God-given power and steps back to comment upon it. Whether in response to his voice of surrender or that spurning God, the speaker changes direction. He abandons the doublespeak, and the tones of bitterness that coincided with the voice of submission in stanza two subside as the speaker paints himself as a courtier before God offering up tears and prayers. While the artillery God sent down in stanza one was referred to as fire, the speaker here defines his own artillery as instruments that woo. There is a sense of ardent seeking rather than demand, and a posture of humility rather than of arrogance.

The caesura of line 20, however—marked especially by the adversative that follows—registers a dramatic shift. The Petrarchan laments of the previous lines turn into direct accusation: *yet thou dost refuse*. God is the cruel beloved rejecting him. Moreover, the speaker implicitly calls back the riddling syllogism of stanza two where both conditional (“If I refuse”) and conclusion (“Then I refuse”) hinge on refusing. The speaker is making clear who is refusing whom. God is refusing the speaker’s motions, expelling them from *his* breast, though the speaker persists in sending them up. Indeed the speaker accused of disposing with “good motions” in stanza one has shown himself responsive to them, at the very least through dialogue.

As readers we sense the legitimacy of the speaker’s claim and feel the fairness of his complaint. While stanzas two, three, and four register a clamor of voices, that of God remains withdrawn. And even where God’s voice appears in stanza one, it does so by means of the speaker’s recollection. In present form the voice of God is absent throughout the poem, and readers hear that silence as overwhelmingly as does the speaker.

It is at this point, after the speaker has directly stated his case against God, that equivocation consumes the speaker’s diction anew. The third stanza continues:

Not, but I am (I must say still)  
 Much more oblig’d to do thy will,  
 Then thou to grant mine: but because  
 Thy promise now hath ev’n set thee thy laws (ll. 21-24).

The speaker appears to be saying two things at once: that he both is, and is not, much more obliged to do God’s will than God the speaker’s. While we may be tempted to emphasize the speaker’s alteration (“I am... / Much more oblig’d”) over the original (“Not... / Much more oblig’d”), such emphasis eliminates the conflicting perspectives at work which are not necessarily

resolved because the syntax says so. Herbert is not trying to make the reader's experience easy. The strain he places upon God as listener is the same snare he intends readers to enter, and we must unravel the opposing strands without losing sight of either claim. As Arthur Lindley reminds us, "What looks like aggression towards God is, in a way entirely characteristic of Herbert, aggression toward the reader.... One of his great subjects is, after all, how we get our relation to God wrong and he needs to implicate us in that error.... In Herbert, as in Augustine, we are our only worst enemy" (164).

Given the earlier context of the stanza, the speaker is hardly "oblig'd" by a debt of gratitude. The question of whether or not he is morally and legally bound is also raised. That is, if God continues to reject the speaker's heartfelt expressions, is God not, by that act, breaking his own covenant, thereby releasing the speaker from the obligation to obey? Of course the speaker's boundless debt for Christ's sacrifice cannot be ignored, and it is likely this fact which precipitates the revision ("Not, but I am"). At the same time, however, Christ's death only takes on significance for the speaker—only places him in a debt of gratitude while binding him morally and legally—in the context of a relationship, in the context of God's covenant with humankind: "but because / Thy promise now hath ev'n set thee thy laws." God has promised to answer the prayers of his people. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (Matt. 7:7). The speaker may be conceding his obligation, but he is also reminding God of his.

As in stanza two, a threat looms. The lines circle back upon themselves and the syntax falters, rendering the position from which the speaker finally turns ("but because") impossible to determine. The speaker gives us a cause: "because / Thy promise now hath ev'n set thee thy laws." But what is the effect? That the speaker continues seeking God with tears and prayers? That he is more obligated to do God's will than God the speaker's? Whatever the case, it may be inferred, take away cause, and the effect—be it the speaker's seeking of God or his obligation to God's will—may also be lost. In straightforward words, if God fails to hold up his end of the bargain by hearing the speaker's prayers, the speaker will hardly be more obliged to carry out God's will and he may stop communicating altogether.

The question of course arises, Why such ambiguity? If the speaker is bold enough to insinuate threats, why not state them outright rather than tuck and loop them into lines that subsequently lack coherence and at the same time suggest surrender? To ask this question, however, is to overlook the speaker's stated problem. God refuses his tears and prayers. Instead we might ask: If God spurns such earnest appeals, is he any likelier to bend his ear to impious vitriol alone?

The speaker has been forced to invent new artillery. While the "tears and prayers" the speaker has been sending up "night and day" have failed, and plain railing appears similarly useless, lines of devotion laced with threats of revolt just might get God's attention. If one voice cannot reach him, perhaps

two. The speaker is amping it up, trying to lure God in a way similar to that in which Herbert entices readers with "bait[s] of pleasure" ("The Church-porch," l. 4). What Nestrick asks regarding the final stanza of the poem we might ask here: "Is such sophistry not the best of human motions?... [the speaker] can make his words confusing in such a way that God will be 'taken in' no matter what" (126).

Of course the idea of "tricking God" with sophistry is absurd, as though God cannot see the stratagems of humankind and know the intention behind an utterance before, and regardless of how, it is spoken. Surely it is a ludicrous anthropomorphization of God to assume we have the power to confuse him.

The final stanza's opening acknowledges such thoughts. It begins:

Then we are shooters both, and thou dost deigne  
To enter combate with us, and contest  
With thine own clay (ll. 25-27).

As in the case of binding his omnipotence with a promise, as in the incarnation itself, God's agreement to engage in combat with humankind introduces an anomaly. The fact that God allows himself to be "shot at" and even pierced means God has agreed to deal with humankind on a level playing field of sorts, ridiculous as it may seem. According to the rules of engagement here, it would seem that God *can* be duped. If the speaker maneuvers subtly enough, he may succeed in leading God to a place where he is trapped—that is, where the speaker's artillery can penetrate.

## V.

After three stanzas of attack—one from God and two from the speaker—as well as the speaker's assertion at the opening of stanza three that he has "also starres and shooters too," it seems patent that he and God "are shooters both." But to consider the opening of stanza four repetitive, or as an instance of stating the obvious, is to overlook the fact that while stanza three begins with the speaker conceding he both has and shoots artillery, the movement of its second quatrain is to show the speaker potentially revoking that. The conjunctive work of this poem is not simply the persistent turns of reason ("but" and "yet") but also the developments of it, the extensions and outcomes of reasoning indicated by "for" and "then." When the speaker says, "Then we are shooters both," he is revealing the result of his prior equivocation. He is deciding to trust God's promise.

It is as if the very use of God's promise as military weight has influenced the speaker.<sup>13</sup> He enters the final stanza accepting that God will, and must, honor his promise, and it is because of this acceptance that they are, and will continue to be, "shooters both." This acceptance furthermore means that, according to the corollary set up in stanza three, the speaker concedes his

position as the one under much greater obligation, and it is perhaps for this reason that the speaker no sooner suggests a kind of equality ("we are shooters both") but that he immediately qualifies it: God "deigne[s] / To enter combat with us, and contest / With [his] own clay." Whereas humankind is endlessly indebted, God has entered into his obligation freely. When God fights with humankind, it is "an act of divine condescension" (Nestrick 125).

The speaker's concession that he is clay is perhaps less a gesture of submission than it is an acknowledgment of the speaker's genuine nature beside God. He is made of the finite, and it is God who has fashioned the elements of his being. The speaker is in no way implying that we are "'irrelevant' as actors in achieving our good" (Nestrick 123). While Herbert may allow questions to arise in the poem regarding our relevancy in this matter, the overall progression of the poem presents us as anything but impertinent or passive agents merely acted upon. We may be clay, but we also shoot artillery and accept or reject God's own—and even, as the rest of the line indicates, "parley."

The line and stanza continues:

But I would parley fain:  
Shunne not my arrows, and behold my breast (ll. 27-28).

To parley is, as critics have observed, to establish peace terms as well as to talk. The fact that the speaker mentions "combat" and "contesting" immediately before "But I would parley fain" suggests an emphasis on peace-making, but we know from the context of the poem that the speaker also longs for simple dialogue, whatever the nature. It should not alarm us, then, that the peace agreement articulated by the speaker is the very opposite of a cease-fire: "Shunne not my arrows, and behold my breast." He is requesting from God what was virtually asked of himself in the first stanza. He is asking that his artillery not be shunned.

The terms of "peace," however, are two-fold. Beyond asking that his artillery not be shunned, the speaker comes very near to asking God to fire again at himself when he urges, "behold my breast."<sup>14</sup> At the same time the "breast" of this stanza recalls the "breast" of stanza one ("Do as thou usest... / Expell good motions from thy breast"). The speaker is once more urging God to reevaluate his perspective, to examine the breast purported to reject "good motions" on a regular basis. Herbert makes this point especially by situating "behold my breast" in the final stanza in perfect balance with the "If I refuse" and "thou dost refuse" of the preceding stanzas, each two-foot iamb ending the first quatrain of its stanza. The question of who is refusing whom, or which breast rejects the "good motions" of the other, is once more raised, though the speaker's tone has grown softer. "Behold my breast" comes more as a plea than an accusation. As one made of clay, the speaker "would parley fain," but he also knows the terms of peace are not his to make.



In that the peace terms suggested involve a continuation of firing rather than a halting of it, the speaker reprises the lesson of stanza one and shows that he has in fact attended to the sound direction there ("good motions... / have the face of fire, but end in rest"). What appears to endanger may promote peace in spiritual terms. At the same time, in that the speaker is requesting God to place himself in the same position of vulnerability and accept what is fired at him also, he is urging the same perspective back on God.

Not deviating from the pattern the other stanzas have set up, the closing quatrain repeats the wiliness of those prior:

Yet if thou shunnest, I am thine:  
 I must be so, if I am mine.  
 There is no articing with thee:  
 I am but finite, yet thine infinitely (ll. 29-32).

According to the customary rules of battle, as Nestrick points out, to shun is to lose (125). But as with his truce perpetuating violence, the speaker is affirming divine rather than strictly earth-bound rules. God will win regardless, and the speaker will defer to his judgment.

This expression is quite distinct from those of the preceding stanzas. What Nestrick discerns in the third stanza might be said for the second as well: that "Herbert explicitly avoids the kind of obedience that would follow from recognizing solely God's infinite power." Indeed as much as the speaker continues exploiting the subtleties of his language in this final stanza, Nestrick perceives that "[h]ere the equivocation works to opposite effect: Just when the poet is most declaring himself to be God's, in his own power, he has also given himself so completely that the voluntary gift is felt as necessity." By the poem's close, "self-possession and self-surrender are seen to be inevitably connected... there is a power in giving oneself that is not present in losing oneself" (123-5).

Certainly this closing quatrain articulates surrender, but it still contains something of the shuffling and hedging rife in the earlier stanzas. The speaker says he is God's and that he "must be so," but appends a conditional ("if I am mine"). And while the speaker concludes that "There is no articing with thee"—he is, after all, "finite"—the poem throughout insists upon the reverse. By the final stanza the speaker has "articl[ed]" with God in both the sense of charging him with accusation and stipulating anew the conditions of their covenant. Moreover the final movement of the poem is to counter the very finitude bolstering this claim: the speaker says that he is God's "infinitely," that a quality of his being persists without end.

Again we find truth conditions in conflict. The speaker is "thine" if he is "mine" and the nature of his being is both with and without limits. But the contradictions here are of a different cast than those of the earlier stanzas.

Whereas the I will / I won't (wash away my stubborn thought) of the second stanza and the I am / I am not (obliged) of the third stanza present real irreconcilable stances, the contradictions of the closing stanza—mine / thine and finite / infinite—in fact correspond within a spiritual framework. To be true to myself and its essential nature ("mine") is to give myself back to him who made me ("thine"). And because I am made in the image of my creator, as much as I am materially finite, God's breath within me remains infinite.

In comparing the position of stanza four beside those of the earlier stanzas we should also note that while stanzas two and three both attempt to influence God by setting up either / or scenarios in the attempt to influence God—so that one stance alone might remain for the speaker—the position of the final stanza reads independently of what God will or will not do. The speaker has stopped outlining conditions based on God's perspective and behavior. The only "if" that remains hinges on speaker ("if I am mine"), and, as the speaker of "Clasping of Hands" indicates, "If I without thee would be mine, / I neither should be mine nor thine" (ll. 9-10).

Of course there is still in this final quatrain the sophistry of earlier stanzas, if also the affirmation of spiritual paradigms in which apparently incompatible truths coincide. But the speaker is stating the realities of an existence stretched between heaven and earth. The act of hurling artillery, as the poem delineates, means the colliding of worlds, paradigms, and voices. It means sincerity, vulnerability, and therefore equivocation, particularly for the person shooting, for it involves working through the tangles of two modes of reasoning. As "Colossians 3:3" points out, such is the predicament of all who would "live here so... / aim[ing] and shoot[ing] at that which *Is* on high": "One life is wrapped *In* flesh, and tends to earth: / The other winds towards *Him* (5-8).

It is by means of a verbal winding and twisting in "Artillerie" that its speaker "aims and shoots" at God, attempting to draw him in, challenging him, and in the process pulling himself nearer. The "starres and shooters" the speaker uses—"Born where thy servants both artilleries use"—are not simply tears and prayers but the double-voiced rhetoric that comes from a commitment to both God and to using one's God-given faculty of reason. Regarding "Artillerie" Severance comments that "Perhaps no other poem in the Herbert canon so vividly illustrates thought and devotion united—and the fragility of such a union, the plight of the mind that refuses to slight its mission as God's instrument" (112).

## VI.

Herbert's God, like the God of the Old Testament, values thoughtfulness alongside devotion, even in its fragility, for he desires the kind of interplay that engages heart as well as mind. Keizer rightly points to the prophet Isaiah who writes, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (1:18) and insists that in recalling the patriarchs who labored to sway God's mind, we avoid ascribing "too much unwillingness to God" since "it would

often seem, in both the Bible and *The Temple*, as though God welcomes such encounters" (21). Keizer cites Herbert's own consideration of these biblical instances in "Decay" where its speaker reminisces:

Sweet were the dayes, when thou didst lodge with Lot,  
 Struggle with Jacob, sit with Gideon,  
 Advise with Abraham, when thy power could not  
 Encounter Moses strong complaints and mone  
 Thy words were then, *Let me alone* (ll. 1-5).

Herbert's God considers the human mind, with its judgments, reasoning—even its subtle orchestrations—as capable of altering his own. He has given this power to humanity, which is also to say, as "Prayer" (I) suggests, that he has provided these instruments of combat. Tears, moans, and groans may be weapons in Herbert, but so are the double edges of his rhetoric. Humankind may be of clay; he may be "all weakness" and his arm "short; yet with a sling / He may do more" ("Praise" [I], ll. 9-12). Or as Keizer observes, "My most essential self is a projection of that Being, and there lies our power to move each other" (26).

Indeed, the appreciation Herbert's God holds for active, rigorous, and even challenging engagement with himself finds a source in both Old Testament and New. For the New Testament regularly echoes, modifies, and directly quotes the Old Testament, as with "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37), which clearly invokes "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5). That Herbert's *Temple* places such emphasis on the strength and force of one's mind in the process of salvation may itself derive from this shift between Old Testament ("might") and New ("mind"). The "might" of the Old Testament and "mind" of the New find themselves consolidated in Herbert as readers feel the exceptional vigor of the poet's intellect working at once upon readers and God. For Herbert and the Jewish-trained Paul together stress the role of the mind in terms of consecrating oneself to God. As Paul himself advises, "[B]e not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

With Scripture at its root, consecration in Herbert thus involves a reconditioning and restructuring of the mind. God does not want the self muted so much as transformed, and this transformation seems to come most fully in *The Temple* when speakers have reached their loudest pitches and become most unruly, arguing and expostulating with God. Keizer as well as Di Cesare remind us of the apostle Matthew's pronouncement that "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (11:12). "Before Christ can be incarnated in the human soul," Keizer adds, "that soul must struggle with God, according to George Herbert" (18). We might furthermore say, as Paul does, that that

soul struggles to the end that God's will may be discerned and approved of—or in Herbert's words on the collection, until he might "subject [his will] to the will of Jesus."

As *The Temple* shows, reasoning with and wrestling against God is crucial to the process of seeking full consent, for it is the necessary means for altering positions and understandings, whether those of God or the speaker. The closing position in "Artillerie" comes not despite the speaker's earlier words and actions but because of them; it is a product of former stances rather than a correction of them. While the poem remains silent as to whether God's position changes, the voice emerging most clearly from the final stanza is one of consent, a consent precipitated by voicing opposition.

At the same time it is through surrender that the speaker becomes his own, and by belonging to God that his very ontology is altered. The final quatrain reads at once as humble concession, lover's promise, and quiet reassertion of power. As concession, it reiterates the humility of the stanza's opening, the fact that we are "thine own clay": "There is no articing with thee." As promise it articulates submission, whether or not God's activity aligns with the speaker's perceptions of what it should be: "I am thine." And finally, in its concluding recognition that by surrendering and belonging to God the essential quality of his existence expands, it reasserts power, even as it suggests the paradox of prayer itself—that we who are feeble and finite can yet wield God's armament against him.

Like "Prayer" (I), "Artillerie" exploits incongruities and indeterminacy not simply because interactions spanning heaven and earth inevitably produce these but also because the continuation of a relationship between the two spheres depends upon them. The consent reached at the end of "Artillerie" remains open-ended and must, as one form of interlocking among others: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). The same knowledge base that has driven the speaker to revolt is by the end of the poem one the speaker acknowledges to be flawed and incomplete, though nevertheless his which he must use.

The aspirations emphasized across the collection, namely that of consent, must remain as that, ideals recurrently sought but inconclusively actualized.<sup>15</sup> As Debra Rienstra remarks in discussing Herbert's interplay with the Petrarchan sonnet sequence tradition and its generation of meaning through "digression, retreat, and recapitulation":

Indeed, the spiritual life may seem to go round and round in its own way. However, the difference, significantly, is that this spiritual merry-go-round is the right one to be on. If Herbert is to outstrip Cupid, he cannot do so through art that falsely represents 'progress.' Rather, the entirety of 'The Church' answers the Petrarchan tradition by demonstrating that in this case, what seems like lack of progress

or futile spinning is still engagement, and engagement with the Beloved is itself the point (40).

Lover and warrior may be one, the speaker of "Artillerie" seems to say. One "can love completely without complete understanding" (Maclean 103). Perhaps this is one of the lessons of both "Artillerie" and "The Pearl"—and one that must be learned and relearned throughout *The Temple*.

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## NOTES

- 1) All quotes from Herbert's poetry are from Helen Wilcox's edition and are cited by line numbers in the text of my essay.
- 2) The concept of "a conclusion in which nothing is concluded" recalls Stanley Fish's insistence that *The Temple* be considered "as a strategy rather than as an object." See, for example, "Catechizing the Reader: Herbert's Socratean Rhetoric" (171).
- 3) All biblical citations are from the KJV.
- 4) The syntax of the poem permits the reading that to use Christ in this way means not simply to take advantage of the slot already there but to perpetuate or (re)produce it as well.
- 5) I do not mean to suggest that Donne's concept of prayer in general is necessarily more limited than Herbert's but merely emphasize the vast scope of Herbert's as expressed in *The Temple*. While Donne separates "Praise" from "Prayer" to discuss thanksgiving as opposed to supplication, in a broader sense he yet considers prayer to comprise both acts as he admits, for example, that "prayer consists as much of praise for the past, as of supplication for the future." See *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and Gospels*, 49.
- 6) In contrasting "the souls bloud" with "The land of spices," I interpret "souls bloud" not only as a life-sustaining force but also as a parallel to Christ's blood, as something spilled to give life.
- 7) As Arnold Stein insists, "As a religious poet Herbert addresses God directly or writes with the intention of being overheard by Him" (160).
- 8) I speak of "Prayer" (I) in this way and not the full "Prayer" sequence since, as George Ryley has observed, it is "Prayer" (I) which considers "the subject" of prayer, while "Prayer" (II) extols "the object of prayer," God himself (136).
- 9) For one discussion of Herbert's careful design, not only of full stanzas but of the lines they contain, see Alicia Ostriker, 298-310.
- 10) As the parable reads in Matt. 13:45-6, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: / Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."
- 11) While one might argue that poetry in general declines to give detailed rationales—the poetic genre itself preferring imaginative expression over logical exposition—Herbert quite often dwells at length on the specific grounds for which his speakers make decisions, insisting that these two modes be brought together. In "The Collar," for example, after declaring that he "will abroad," the speaker spends the larger part of the poem developing and sustaining the basis for that threatened departure, a basis which is carefully rationalized while folded into figurative language. That the speaker of "The Pearl" says nothing about the returns of this exchange, but expounds meticulously on the allure of learning, honor, and pleasure, thus suggests something of a spiritual red flag for readers.
- 12) The voice of retrospection that enters at the poem's close, revealing the past tense of the poem throughout, seems to function as Rosemond Tuve (181) claims it does throughout Herbert. Summing up Tuve's position,

Barbara Leah Harman reports that "retrospect is not simply a device, but a great manifestation of fidelity: the speaker who reports his experience still suffers from it; he tells the story because he has not overcome it" (509).

13) Chana Block observes that for Herbert, "Reliance on Scripture... is man's surest defense, even before God" (12).

14) While the "lap" of stanza one may suggest to modern readers the area between the waist and knees, in early modern diction it also denotes the pleat of a garment over one's breast, thus implying one's bosom. That the speaker of this stanza is accused of rejecting "good motions from [his] breast" almost certainly nods to this early modern sense of "lap."

15) Consider that even in *The Temple's* concluding poem, "Love" (III), while the speaker ultimately "sit[s] and eat[s]," he spends the larger part of the poem resisting that offer and issuing counterarguments to "Love." Down to the closing stanza, the speaker is arguing ("let my shame / Go where it doth deserve") (ll. 13-14).

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